

# DISSERTATIONS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND BUSINESS STUDIES

TUULI LÄHDESMÄKI

## *Identity Politics in the European Capital of Culture Initiative*

PUBLICATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EASTERN FINLAND  
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UNIVERSITY OF  
EASTERN FINLAND



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## **ABSTRACT**

The research focuses on identity politics in the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) initiative and investigates the production and relations of four area-based cultural identities (local, regional, national, and European) intertwined with the policy, promotional, and reception discourses of the initiative. The inter-disciplinary investigation combines views from policy, urban, and reception studies and focuses on the analysis of identity politics with the concept of cultural identity. With manifold data (policy documents, promotional and planning material, observations, online discussions, questionnaire responses) and a discourse analytic and mixed method approach the research brings to the fore continuities and breaks between macro and micro structures in the identity politics within the ECOC frame. The implementation of the research includes three scalarly focuses: the EU policy rhetoric, the local promotional rhetoric, and the audience reception in three case ECOCs (Pécs2010, Tallinn2011, and Turku2011). This research report is a compilation of five articles and a joint introduction. The research indicated how the area-based cultural identities obtain different meanings, contents, and significances on the different policy levels and in varying geographical, cultural, and social contexts of the case cities. The ECOC designation includes strong symbolic meanings – it has been used particularly in several Eastern European EU member states as a tool for rethinking their cultural identities and in remapping the cultural geography of Europe. Cultural initiatives are the EU's technologies of power. One of their fundamental strategies is to mingle the top-down and bottom-up dynamics between the EU and local agents. Cities are expected to compete for the ECOC designation, invest in its implementation, and foster a common European identity on their own initiative. This is at the same time the ideological core of the EU's identity politics: to produce self-creating cultural integration in the EU. Keywords: city, cultural identity, cultural policy, discourse, the European Capital of Culture, the European Union, identity politics

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Väitöskirja

## **ABSTRAKTI**

Tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan identiteettipolitiikkaa EU:n koordinoimassa Euroopan kulttuuripääkaupunki -hankkeessa (EKPK) paikallisuuden, alueellisuuden, kansallisuuden ja eurooppalaisuuden käsitteiden välisten suhteiden ja niiden tuottamisen näkökulmasta. Monitieteinen tutkimus yhdistää sosiologian, politiikan tutkimuksen, kaupunkitutkimuksen ja kulttuurintutkimuksen näkökulmia ja lähestyy identiteettipolitiikkaa kulttuurisen identiteetin käsitteen avulla. Monipuolisen tutkimusaineiston (joka käsittää mm. poliittisia asiakirjoja, markkinointi- ja suunnittelumateriaaleja, havainnointia, online-keskusteluja ja kyselyaineiston) ja diskurssianalyttisen ja monimenetelmäisen lähestymistavan avulla tutkimuksessa pyritään osoittamaan identiteettipolitiikan jatkumoit ja katkoksia eri alueellisten tasojen välillä. Tutkimuksessa identiteettipolitiikkaa tarkastellaan erityisesti EU:n poliittisessa retoriikassa, EKPK:n markkinointiretoriikassa ja tapahtumien vastaanotossa Pécsissä, Tallinnassa ja Turkussa. Tutkimus koostuu viidestä artikkelista ja niitä yhdistävästä johdannosta. Tutkimus osoittaa, miten alueelliset kulttuuri-identiteetit saavat erilaisia merkityksiä ja sisältöjä politiikan eri alueellisilla tasoilla ja kohdekaupunkien maantieteellisesti, kulttuurisesti ja sosiaalisesti eroavissa konteksteissa. EKPK-hanketta on hyödynnetty etenkin Itä-Euroopassa kulttuuri-identiteettien uudelleenmuotoilussa ja Euroopan kulttuurisen maantieteen uudelleenjäsentämisessä. Kulttuurihankkeet ovat EU:n vallan teknologioita. Ne pyrkivät sekoittamaan EU:n ja paikallisten toimijoiden välistä hierarkiaa. Kaupunkien odotetaan kilpailevan EKPK-tittelistä, investoivan itse sen toteuttamiseen ja vaalivan eurooppalaista identiteettiä oma-aloitteisesti. Tämä on samalla EU:n identiteettipolitiikan ideologinen ydin: saada aikaan omaehtoista kulttuurista integraatiota EU:ssa.

Asiasanat: diskurssi, Euroopan kulttuuripääkaupunki, Euroopan Unioni, identiteettipolitiikka, kaupunki, kulttuuri-identiteetti, kulttuuripolitiikka

# *Foreword*

This doctoral dissertation in sociology is based on some of my key articles published as the result of a research project titled 'Identity politics in Pécs, Tallinn and Turku as European Capitals of Culture (ID-ECC)', which was funded by the Academy of Finland between 2011 and 2013. The planning of the research project on the European Capital of Culture initiative had, however, already started in 2007. During that year, I had the chance to have inspiring discussions with several colleagues and scholars who were interested in launching an international research project that would combine the topics of urbanism, contemporary culture, and cultural politics. The discussions were concretized in several project proposals which did not manage to receive funding. The discussions and the project planning did nevertheless create the basis for eventual cooperation during the implementation of my own research project. I want to thank PhD Satu Kähkönen (University of Jyväskylä), PhD Miklós Kiss (University of Groningen), and PhD Barbara Oetl (University of Regensburg) for the visionary discussions on the recent phenomena and dimensions of contemporary culture. In addition, I want to thank Professor Kärt Summatavet (Estonian Academy of Arts), Docent Anja Kervanto Nevanlinna (University of Helsinki and University of Jyväskylä), and PhD Ulla Pohjamo for their cooperation in planning and preparing the project proposals.

My research project was funded by the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, from the August 2009 till December 2010. The position as a researcher at the Faculty of Humanities in the discipline of Hungarian Studies enabled me to work on the topic already in 2007 and 2008. The contacts created during these years have been extremely valuable in investigating the European Capital of Culture events in Pécs, Hungary. I want to thank Professor Péter Müller (University of Pécs), Professor Beáta Thomka (University of Pécs), M.A. Adrienn Bognár (University of Pécs), and PhD Kristóf Fenyvesi (University of Jyväskylä) for their help in the implementation of my field research in Pécs and for providing me 'insider' views from Pécs. Besides Pécs, the project has included field research periods in Tallinn and Turku. I wish to thank all my contacts in these cities for their help in realizing the study, particularly the coordinators of the European Capital of Culture Volunteer Programs and all the volunteers who assisted me in collecting and translating the data. The financial support of the University of Jyväskylä enabled my field research in Pécs as a Visiting Fellow at the local University in 2010 and a research period as a Visiting Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence in 2013. During the project, I have used the services of several

translators and translation agencies in Finland and abroad. I want to particularly thank M.Soc.Sc. Markku Nivalainen who has proof-read most of my English language publications on the topic of the project.

One of the main points of departure in the project has been the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature of both its topic and the approaches used in the investigation. During the project, I have participated in various inter-disciplinary conferences and received helpful feedback for my research and useful contacts for further cooperation. I want to particularly express my gratitude for the inspiring conferences organized by the University Network of European Capitals of Culture and the Inter-Disciplinary.Net. In addition, I have had the chance to work with several prominent scholars in relation to the topic of this study. I want to especially thank Director Dr. Lyudmila Nurse (Oxford XXI) and Dean Albin Wagener (Catholic University of the West, Angers).

This doctoral dissertation has been supervised by Professor Leena Koski (University of Eastern Finland) and Professor Laura Assmuth (University of Eastern Finland). I want to thank them for the fruitful discussions on the core concepts and the points of view of the study and for reading and commenting on my texts and the dissertation manuscript. In addition, I am grateful for my pre-opponents, Professor Greg Richards (Tilburg University) and Docent Maaria Linko (University of Helsinki and University of Jyväskylä) for their constructive suggestions and remarks on my research. The publication at hand forms an end to a certain phase of the research project and summarizes the results obtained during the past seven years. However, the research on the European Capitals of Culture, identity politics, discourses of the EU cultural policy, and their reflections at the local level will continue.

In Jyväskylä, 30 April 2014

Tuuli Lähdesmäki

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

EC = the European Community

ECOC = the European Capital of Culture

EHL = the European Heritage Label



# *Introduction: Researching identities as politics*

*People living along borders enjoy an experience of Europe which is very different from that seen by people living in the Western European centre.*

From the application of Pécs for the European Capital of Culture (József Takáts: *Borderless City. European Capital of Culture – Pécs, 2010*. Pécs: Pécs2010 Application Centre, 2005, p. 22).

*As a candidate for the European Capital of Culture 2011, Tallinn and Estonia have the potential to return to the European Cultural map as full members, forming a new European identity.*

From the application of Tallinn for the European Capital of Culture (Kaarel Tarand: *Everlasting Fairytale, Tallinn...* Tallinn: Foundation for Tallinn as the Capital of Culture, 2006, p. 25).

*Through encounter, interaction and internationality, our children become open-minded European citizens who reinforce the European multicultural community.*

From the application of Turku for the European Capital of Culture (Niina Helander, Suvi Innilä, Mari Jokinen and Jukka Talve (eds.): *Turku on Fire. The Application of the City of Turku for the European Capital of Culture 2011*. Turku: City of Turku, 2006, p. 9).

# *1 Contextualizing the European Capital of Culture Initiative*

## **1.1 THE EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE IN THE EU CULTURAL POLICY**

The European Capital of Culture (ECOC) is one of the EU's longest running – and at the same time one of its most well-known and influential – cultural initiatives. During the decades of its existence it has involved a great number of people in planning, implementing, and participating in diverse urban projects, cultural events, and performances. It has raised a broad attention in local, regional, and national media, influenced urban planning and development in the cities, boosted the so-called cultural and creative industries, brought about new policies and management practices, produced scientific investigations, entailed new international networks of cultural agents, academics, and organizations, etc. The EU documents regarding the planning of other European-wide cultural initiatives often refer to the ECOC as a good example. Can the initiative be considered as a success story? From certain points of view, the answer is definitely positive. However, the initiative has also caused serious political struggles at local and regional levels, tensions among the cultural operators and agents in the cities, and confrontation between local citizens. The implementation of the initiative has comprised short-sighted and quickly set-up projects, included unfinished or poorly prepared regeneration and development plans, and created complex administrative and bureaucratic practices. Besides the enthusiast reception and 'ECOC zeal', the initiative has also been objected and criticized for a number of reasons. According to the critical views, the ECOC initiative is far from being a success story. What is this controversial cultural initiative about? How has it emerged and established its position as one of the EU's core cultural initiatives? What are the EU's motives for running the ECOC scheme? The following section aims to contextualize the ECOC initiative and its identity political attempts in the EU cultural policy by discussing these questions.

The ECOC initiative was launched in 1985, when the Ministers responsible for the Cultural Affairs in the member states of the European Community (EC)

adopted a resolution on an annual event named the European City of Culture (Resolution of the Ministers 1985). The initiative was run as an intergovernmental scheme till 1999, when it was transformed into a Community action of the European Parliament and Council (Decision 1419/1999/EC). The establishment of the initiative did not have a major impact on its EU funding, but it enabled the EU to formulate a more detailed set of regulations, instructions, and suggestions for the implementation of the initiative (Oerters & Mittag 2008, 75). When the initiative was turned into an EU action, its name was reformulated as the European Capital of Culture. The name change can be interpreted as an attempt to raise the significance of the initiative and as a symbolic gesture of increasing unity in the EU. The EU does not have an official capital – although Brussels is often referred to as such – but along with the renewed ECOC scheme, the EU at least gained an official cultural capital, the location of which however switches annually between European countries. Since the launch of the initiative, nearly 60 cities have been designated as the European City/Capital of Culture. Since 1997, several cities could have been designated simultaneously. At the same time, the designation was also expanded to cover European cities in non-EU member states, which could make a bid for the European Parliament, Council, Commission, and the Committee of the Regions to host the event.

The ECOC initiative is built on various explicit and implicit political and ideological aims. In the latest decision on the initiative, approved in 2006, the main aims of the scheme are elaborated to two pillars: ‘the European Dimension’ and ‘City and Citizens’. In the decision, the ‘European Dimension’ aims to “foster cooperation between cultural operators, artists and cities from the relevant Member States”, “highlight the richness of cultural diversity in Europe”, and ‘bring common aspects of European cultures to the fore”, while the pillar of ‘City and Citizens’ aims to “foster the participation of the citizens living in the city and its surroundings” and increase “the long-term cultural and social development of the city” (Decision 1622/2006/EC). In general, the selection and designation of the ECOCs is part of the EU cultural policy, which aims to have various cultural, political, economic, and social impacts on local, regional, and European levels.

One of the core focuses of the ECOC initiative is in identity politics – it penetrates both the explicit and implicit political aims of the scheme. Designating the ECOCs aims to strengthen European-wide cultural cooperation, promote both diversity and common aspects of European culture(s), increase mutual understanding and intercultural dialogue between citizens, activate people to participate in cultural production and consumption, produce a common feeling of belonging to Europe and the EU, promote the idea of a common European identity, create social cohesion in the community, and, eventually, produce deeper (cultural) integration in the union. The EU uses the cultural frame of the ECOC initiative as a political and ideological instrument to

address the fundamental questions of the union – what is the basis on which the EU is being and should be constructed? Is this basis only political or is it rather cultural? Is its point of departure in the present day action or in the historical layers of shared meanings? Is it constructed on top-down imposed regulations or on bottom-up generated communal sentiments?

In addition to the identity political aims, the ECOC initiative comprises a variety of directly or indirectly articulated objectives. The diversity of multi-level objectives creates challenges to the implementation of the initiative, as the objectives are not mutually reinforcing and they can even be interpreted as contradictory (O’Callaghan 2011, 2). The concept of culture lies at the core of the political rhetoric of the ECOC initiative. Culture is considered as an instrument and an arena for implementing diverse political objectives. Thus, various political, economic, and social objectives are discussed in the ECOC policy documents in cultural terms.

The launch of the ECOC initiative and turning it into an EU action are the EU’s cultural political acts that reflect certain trajectories and shifts in the ideological aims of the union. On one hand, culture can be perceived as a relatively new focus in the EU policy. On the other hand, it has been considered as one of the underlying ideas that have motivated the creation and building of the EC and, later, the EU. Several scholars (e.g., Rosamond 2000; Sassatelli 2006; Näss 2009) have pointed out how cultural and social cohesion and integration in the EU have been expected to emerge as a ‘spill-over’ of a successful cooperation in the core areas of the EU, i.e., economy and trade. However, a comprehensive idea of multilevel integration – including the cultural point of view – has been included in the action of European organizations, such as the Council of Europe, already in the early stages. In fact, culture has been at the core of the activities of the Council of Europe since the beginning, as is indicated by its initiation of the European Cultural Convention, signed in 1954. The Council of Europe has had, in general, a major influence on the EU’s political discourses. Its rhetorical formulations and interest areas have been absorbed into the EU’s political discourses and goals with a short delay, particularly in questions related to culture (Sassatelli 2009, 43; Patel 2013, 6).

The EU cultural policy has a profoundly symbolical nature. As Klaus Patel (2013, 2) describes it: “[C]ultural policy is designed both to enlarge the scope of EU power and authority and to win the hearts and minds – and not just the hands and muscle – of the European citizens.” Thus, the EU cultural policy has an affective function which is expected to ease the integration policies and the use of the EU authority in other sectors. The symbolical nature of the EU cultural policy/ies is also due to “the odd position of being at the same time limited in their reach and scope, yet distinctively oriented to the ambitious objectives of identity-building”, as Monica Sassatelli (2009, 47) notes. The symbolical nature of the policy is also highlighted by the vague but affective rhetoric used in the policy discourse. The policy rhetoric appeals e.g., to a

‘common cultural heritage’ and a ‘European identity’, but their contents are never explicated. Same vagueness and ambiguity characterizes the EU’s official slogan ‘united in diversity’ which is being repeated in the EU policy rhetoric (Sassatelli 2006, 31).

During the past two decades, the strengthening of the cultural political objectives of the EU has been much discussed in the academia. Cultural policy has been perceived as forming an area of increasing centrality for the union (O’Callaghan 2011; Näss 2010). The first steps in the cultural policy arena of the EC/EU were already taken in the 1970s. Launching cultural initiatives, however, became more active during the 1980s. Between 1984 and 1986, the European Council adopted several resolutions dealing with cultural matters: besides selecting the annual European Cities of Culture, the Council paid attention e.g., to European films, the mobility of artists, and the networking of libraries. In 1987, the EC officially established the Council of Ministers of Culture and the ad hoc Commission of Cultural Issues. (Näss 2010.) The Maastricht Treaty (1992) represented the first treaty article explicitly focused on culture. It allowed the EC/EU to develop cultural policies on top of those of the member states (Oerters & Mittag 2008, 75). The contribution to culture was, however, very limited in the treaty and the nation-states were still perceived as the main agents in the cultural sector (Sassatelli 2009, 27). During the 1990s and 2000s, the EU implemented various new cultural programs and actions offering economic support to inter-European collaboration on cultural projects and their distribution. Establishing the ECOC designation as an EU action is a part of this broader development of the EU policies.

The rhetoric and objectives of the EU’s identity politics have transformed during the past decades. The core focus of the EU’s identity politics is in the production and meaning-making of a European identity and outlining the role of a European identity in the building of the EU as a cultural and social – and not only political – entity. Sassatelli (2009, 39) has located the emergence of the EC/EU’s identity discourse in the 1970s. The Declaration on European Identity signed in Copenhagen in 1973 by nine EC member states can be perceived as the starting point of the official discourse on these matters. With the declaration, the discourse shifted from the economic and societal ‘integration’ to the discussions on ‘identity’ as an important element of unity in the EC. According to Sassatelli (2009, 40–42), in the 1980s the content of the identity discourse transferred from the emphasis of a collective European identity to the diversity of individual European identities, and from an external dimension articulating national, European and world-wide relations to an internal dimension articulating European, national, and local relations. The current EU’s identity discourse, which follows the union’s official slogan ‘united in diversity’, aims to combine the collective and individual dimensions and include different territorial scales – particularly local and regional – as building blocks of a European identity. The

EU's current identity discourse functions as an ideological basis for the policies and rhetoric of the ECOC initiative.

Besides the identity discourse, the ECOC initiative can be located into a broader frame of the urban and regional EU policies. These policies are, however, closely related to the identity political attempts of the EU. Thus, the urban and regional policies are intertwined with identity politics. Besides the cultural initiatives, the EU's interest on regional development and regeneration has been administered through European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), including programs like Urban and Interreg. The main aim of these structural funds is to decrease the economical and infrastructural disparities between the poorer and richer areas of Europe. Especially the Central and Eastern European EU member-states are considered to contain regions that have the strongest need for cohesion projects and regional development in order to reach the average level of well-being in the union. (Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006, annex III; EC 2011a.) In Central and Eastern European cities, the implementation of the ECOC designation has usually been combined with major development projects and the construction of urban infrastructure financed with the EU's structural funds together with national, regional, and local capital. Through these funds urban and regional issues have become part of the EU cohesion and (cultural) integration policy (Frank 2006, 40).

The ECOC's focus on urbanity and urban cultural matters fits well with the current idea of perceiving modern European cities as significant social and cultural entities and as key sites of governing the process of Europeanization (Sassatelli 2009, 79; Le Galès 2002). The ECOC initiative is not the only EU action to intertwine urban issues with identity political aims and cultural meanings. Since 1990s, the EU has started to generally pay more attention to European cities, urbanity, and urban development. In various EU documents related to urban issues (such as the Green Paper on Urban Development (1990), EC Expert Group on the Urban Environment (1990), European Sustainable Cities Project (1993), European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign (1994), Toward an Urban Agenda in the European Union (1997), Community Initiative URBAN I (1994–1999), Community Initiative URBAN II (2000–2006), and Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment (2004)), a city is perceived as having diverse – and not only economic – meanings. In the EU's urban policies the idea of a European city is connected to various social and cultural concepts, such as democracy, integration, participation, history, and identity. (Frank 2006, 43.) The latest decisions on the ECOC initiative stress similar social and cultural values as its core focuses.

As Cris Shore (1993, 785–786) has noted, an emphasis of the EU as a 'humanistic enterprise' based on various social virtues and common cultural roots and identity can be perceived to have functional utility: it is a tool for promoting the EU's political legitimacy as well as the attempts to bring the

different member states together. The fundamental utility of this emphasis is in its affective nature: it appeals to the idea of Europe as a cultural entity, and thus justifies the promotion of cultural integration in the EU. Even though the EU never fails to repeat the idea of diversity in its policy rhetoric, the ideas of unity, cohesion, and integration dominate the explicit and implicit policy discourses. Culture and cultural questions are easily turned into instruments of fostering unity, cohesion, and integration. Thus, culture has become a major political arena in the EU's policy discourses. As several scholars (Ifversen 2002; Hansen 2010) have noted, the EU policy rhetoric and policy discussions on a common 'European culture' have been profoundly politicized, while the rhetoric and discussions on political or civic matters, such as the EU citizenship, have been ethno-culturalized. Diverse political, civic, economic, and social issues are approached in the EU in relation to culture.

## **1.2 TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE INITIATIVE**

The focuses and rhetoric of the ECOC initiative have altered together with the transformation of the EU cultural policy and political goals and discourses. The implementation of the initiative at the local level has undergone particularly significant changes as the cities have aimed to utilize the designation for various functions that have been topical in current cultural, urban, and regeneration policies. Over its history, the ECOC designation has developed from a short-term cultural festival into a year-long urban event which enables the economic and social development and regeneration of the city space. The designation has become a sought-after brand used by the cities in image building, place promotion, and city marketing. The following section discusses the major changes in the policies and implementation of the initiative and motives behind them.

To describe the shifts in the implementation of the ECOC initiative, Greg Richards and Robert Palmer (2010, 205–206) have identified three distinctive periods in its history. In the 1980s, the emphasis in the ECOC programs was mostly in high-cultural events. Richards and Palmer describe this phase in the history of the ECOC designation as an 'expensive festival'. According to them, the next phase, lasting from 1990 to 2004, was characterized by investments in cultural regeneration. The ethos of a high-cultural festival changed notably after Glasgow was selected as the ECOC for 1990. Since then, various ECOCs have followed its example and used the designation as a tool to revive the city by investing in different branches of culture. Like Glasgow, a number of designated ECOCs have aimed to induce urban development and regeneration through the promotion of cultural and creative industries (Palmer 2004a, 103; García 2004a, 319; 2005; Oerters & Mittag 2008, 88–92). In addition, the ECOC year of Glasgow

has been described as a turning point in the alteration of the designation towards a city-marketing event (Oerters & Mittag 2008, 70). According to Richards and Palmer, the last phase in the history of the ECOC, starting in 2005, is characterized by investments in infrastructure. Following these views, Monica Sassatelli (2013, 64–66) has described the current state of the ECOC initiative as a phase of ‘capitalization’: cities compete to become recognized as capitals (in accordance with the name of the ECOC title), but capitalization also evokes economic capital as both the means and ends of economic processes. As Sassatelli notes, the ECOCs invest their assets in the hope of greater economic as well as cultural returns.

In practice the aims to regenerate the urban space, invest in assets and (cultural) infrastructure, and create economic boost usually merge in the plans and policies of the ECOCs. Various ECOCs have used the initiative as a tool to revive the city and develop its urban space by upgrading cultural institutions and their facilities, modifying and modernizing squares and parks, revitalizing less used or declined districts by for example preparing and cleaning their environment and installing public art, constructing new buildings for cultural use, renewing streets, roads and the transportation system, and renovating old estates and heritage sites. Especially the empty industrial estates of the declined old industries close to the inner city have been transformed for the use of cultural industries and as places of cultural and leisure time consumption. The ECOC initiative has been particularly popular among declining industrial cities that have needed to shift the base of their economies from production to consumption and from heavy industry to cultural industry (Richards 2000, 164).

The ECOC designation has notably influenced the urban development and transformation of the city space in several ECOCs in the Central and Eastern European countries that joined the EU in its Eastern enlargement in 2004 and 2007. The designation has previously had similar kind of influence on the cities in the so-called old member states. The transformation plans in the Central and Eastern European ECOCs, however, have often been more comprehensive: several smaller cities suffering from declined industries or other economic difficulties have either implemented or planned to implement large-scale construction projects and physical changes to the city space in order to reach ‘the European standard’. Cities carrying the physical and mental heritage of the past socialist regimes have aimed to strengthen their belonging to the European cultural and social sphere through the ECOC designation and the regeneration and urban development projects it enables. The ECOC designation includes strong symbolic meanings and references to the idea of Europeanness – and thus the designation has been used in the ‘new’ EU member states as a tool for branding the city as European and, more broadly, in remapping or rethinking the geography of Europe.

The cultural initiatives are the EU’s political instruments through which it aims to influence objectives such as economic growth and the unity of the union.



These particular objectives were brought into the focus of the initiative during the Eastern enlargement of the union. Through the initiative the EU aimed to influence the cultural unity in the renewed union: the aim was to get the new member states and their regions and cities to bring to the fore their cultural assets and to feel themselves as (culturally) equal with older member states. Since 2009, the EU has annually designated at least two ECOCs – one in the so-called old member state and one in the states that joined the EU in 2004 or 2007 (Decision No 649/2005/EC). With this policy the EU started a concrete process of cultural ‘Europeanization’ of the recently joined member states. Cities in these states were put into a situation in which they had the chance (and were expected) to compete for the ECOC designation according to the criteria determined by the EU. After the change in the designation policy in 2005, tens of cities in the new member states started to prepare applications and develop plans in which the cities aimed to present themselves through their culture and city space as ‘European’. Along with the renewed policy, the ECOC initiative can be interpreted as having stepped into a new phase, in which discussions on Europe and a European identity have activated in a new way and become major focuses of the implementation and promotional rhetoric of the ECOC programs at the local level. The policy of selecting the cities among the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ member states will continue till 2032 (EC 2012a).

Besides the impact of the EU’s Eastern enlargement, some new emphasis in the EU policy discourses, such as the trend towards increasing civil society involvement, have influenced the implementation of the initiative at the local level during the past decade (Staiger 2013, 33). In those ECOCs where major regeneration processes and city branding efforts have already taken place before the designation, particular emphasis has been in involving local citizens in diverse cultural and civic projects. The designated cities have stressed the importance of local culture, its history, traditions, peculiarities, and characteristic environments, and the role of local artists and cultural producers as its creators. In these cities, the grass roots level of culture has often been considered as a significant urban layer which the ECOC should foster and support. Various recent ECOCs have focused on lowering the threshold of producing and consuming culture, and encouraging the citizens to play a bigger part in planning and implementing the cultural year. Several ECOCs have followed the example of Lille2004 and recruited a number of volunteers to help in the implementation of cultural events (Oerters & Mittag 2008). The attempts to activate local citizens and involve them in cultural production are generally related to the broader cultural political aims of taking into account the needs of different audience groups and diminishing the hierarchies between the different forms of culture. The recent ECOCs have therefore aimed to promote in their cultural programs not only the established art institutions and institutionalized art forms, but also the small-scale cultural activity and cultural acts in everyday life and environment.

Even though strengthening and creating a common European identity and fostering the idea of a common European culture are the underlying identity political aims of the ECOC initiative, several scholars have criticized the initiative for losing its European dimension. According to Jürgen Mittag (2013, 30), the European dimension of the initiative has lost its importance over the course of time – that is until only very recently. Various scholars have indicated that the ‘European dimension’ or a European identity cannot actually be perceived in the contents of the ECOC programs and their cultural events (Myerschough 1994; Sassatelli 2002, 444; Palmer 2004a, 85–86; Richards & Wilson 2004, 1945). Similarly, the evaluation report on four ECOCs of 2007 and 2008, for example, suggests that this dimension was the least emphasized aim for the initiative (*Ex-Post Evaluation of 2007 and 2008 European Capitals of Culture* 2009). Indeed, the ‘European dimension’ or a European identity may be difficult to perceive from the ECOC programs because the contents of the concepts are vague and abstract. In the programs of the ECOCs, the ‘European dimension’ has been, however, introduced both on the practical level by referring to the collaboration between artists and other cultural agents from different member states, and on the contentual level in various topics which have been described in the programs as European (Lähdesmäki 2011). The European dimension and European identity have been decidedly referred to in the planning, promotional, and policy discourses of the ECOCs.

In spite of the transformed focuses in the implementation of the ECOC initiative, the scheme itself has maintained its symbolical value for the designated cities, their host countries, and the EU. The significance and weight of the ECOC brand has increased evenly during the years. Maintaining the initiative as a desired and competed-for city brand serves the cultural political aims of the EU.

# *2 Conceptual and Methodological Framework*

## **2.1 RESEARCH AS A PROCESS OF UNDERSTANDING**

The ECOC initiative pertains to several areas in the society: arts and culture, identity, urban planning, infrastructure, cultural management, governance, politics, branding, marketing, economy, tourism, social well-being, civil participation, intercultural encounters, education, etc. Due to the inter- and cross-disciplinarity of the initiative, understanding its points of departure, implementation, and outcomes requires openness for different perspectives. In this section the conceptual and methodological framework of the study at hand is defined and its approaches and position in the interdisciplinary research field are outlined.

The ECOC initiative and the designated cities have been actively investigated in the academia since the 1990s with various theoretical approaches. However, the emphasis of the research has been in the aspects of cultural policy, urban studies, and sociology. The main interests of these studies have focused on cultural political and urban political processes at the EU and local levels, cultural political decision-making, policy discourses, development of cultural management, and notions and experiences of the cultural agents, managers, and decision-makers involved in the ECOC initiative and its implementation (e.g. Sassatelli 2002; 2006; 2009; Richards 2000; García 2004a; 2005; Lassur, Tafel-Viia, Summatavet & Terk 2010; Bergsgard & Vassenden 2011; Patel (ed.) 2013).

Besides policy level analysis, the aspects of culture-led or cultural regeneration (on the concepts e.g., Evans 2005) and regional development and the cultural and creative industries have dominated the interests of investigations (e.g., Heikkinen 2000; Richards 2000; García 2004a; 2004b; Rommetvedt 2008; Campbell 2011). This reflects broader trends in recent urban policies: the ECOC was introduced at a time when the culture-led and cultural urban regeneration approaches were about to emerge, and European cities started to reimage their role as cultural centers (Sassatelli 2009, 95). The investigations of the ECOC initiative as a culture-led or cultural regeneration can also be seen in light of the increased interest in festival and mega-event research. The ECOC designation has also been actively researched in the broad and interdisciplinary frame of the European Studies by focusing the theoretical discussion on the topics of the EU policies and governance and a common

European identity (e.g., Hansen 2002; Reme 2002). In addition, scholars have been interested in the media discourses and representations of the designated cities (e.g., Aiello & Trulow 2006; García 2005; 2010).

The diverse impacts of the ECOC designation at local and regional levels have been analyzed in several national research projects, particularly at the universities located in the designated cities. These studies have covered diverse issues ranging from the tangible cultural outcomes to the residents' and visitors' impressions on the city (e.g., Richards & Wilson 2004; Berg & Rommetvedt 2009), and from the networks of cultural operators (e.g., Bergsgard & Vassenden 2011; Campbell 2011) to the economic impact measured e.g., through hotel stays and tourist visits (e.g., Herrero et. al. 2006; Richards & Rotariu 2011). The impacts of the designation have also been among the main focuses of the ex post evaluations commissioned both by local authorities and the EU. According to Sassatelli (2009, 97), the impact studies still lack a proper view on the symbolic dimension of the ECOC designation, i.e., how reality and identities are culturally framed in the ECOCs. In addition, neither the impact studies nor the ex post evaluations have systematically or critically analyzed the influence of the designation to the contents of the art and cultural offerings in the ECOCs: whether the designation has affected the topics, expressions, and quality of the artistic and cultural products or has it only influenced the facilities of producing them and their promotion. The impact studies have usually investigated the influences of the designation soon after the ECOC year. Investigations of long-term impacts would broaden the views on the initiative and help future ECOCs to plan and implement their cultural year in a more effective and sustainable manner.

Analyzing the implementation and impacts of the ECOC initiative, scholars have often confined themselves to presenting a deeper analysis of just one case city. However, some broader investigations have applied a comparative approach to the implementation of the initiative (e.g. Sassatelli 2002; 2009). Particularly the studies of John Myerscough (1994) (focusing on the ECOCs of 1984–1994), Robert Palmer (2004a; 2004b) (focusing on the ECOCs of 1995–2004), Robert Palmer and Greg Richards (2007; 2009), and Robert Palmer, Greg Richards and Diane Dodd (2011; 2012) have offered useful comparative results and background information for further research.

The aim of the research at hand is to focus on identity politics in the frame of the ECOC initiative and investigate especially the four core area-based identities intertwined with the policy discourses of the initiative – local, regional, national, and European identities – and their interdependence and mutual relations. These different identity concepts criss-cross and produce each other in a complex way in the policy and promotional discourses, in the cultural expressions of the ECOC events, and in the reception of the cultural events in the ECOCs. The key identity concepts are approached in the study on three levels: in the policy rhetoric of the EU, in the promotional rhetoric of the

designated cities, and in the audience reception of the ECOC events. The main research questions in the study are: *What kind of identity politics is involved in the policies, promotion, and reception of the ECOC initiative and what are its motives and aims? How are the area-based identities produced, defined, used, and perceived in the ECOC initiative?* In addition, each article selected for the dissertation has more focused research questions. The main focuses in each article are introduced in section 4. The fundamental aim of the research is to combine policy, urban, and reception studies with the idea of identity politics as a penetrating aspect. In the study, identity politics is understood in a broader sense than just as a political discourse. Besides political discourse, it comprises diverse ways of manifesting identities in culture and of interpreting them. The investigation aims to bring to the fore the issues which Sassatelli considered still lacking from the ECOC research – to discuss how different identities are culturally framed in the ECOCs.

By focusing on the concepts of local, regional, national, and European identities at the EU, local, and grass roots levels, the study aims to bring to the fore continuities and breaks between macro and micro structures in identity politics. The starting point for the research has been in the hypothesis that area-based identity concepts obtain different meanings, contents, and significances at different scalarly levels. At the EU policy level these concepts are extremely abstract and undefined. However, undefined concepts have their tacit meanings, which may obey certain ideologies and politics. The designated ECOCs follow the EU policy rhetoric in their promotional material, sometimes even in detail, because it is a prerequisite for the designation. The cities are expected to make the EU policy rhetoric and abstract ideological formulations concrete in their cultural program. (Lähdesmäki 2008.) However, the relations and logic of area-based identity concepts vary in the designated cities due to their different historical, social, cultural, and demographical backgrounds. In addition, the audiences of the ECOC events have diverse notions on how the events represent and bring to the fore local, regional, and European identities, and what kind of identity politics the ECOC events should eventually focus on. Although the ECOC initiative includes explicit criteria for the candidate cities and the agenda which the designed cities are expected to follow, it also gives the cities freedom to interpret from their own point of view the common themes involved in the initiative. This freedom, the diversity of the cities, and the organisational differences in their ECOC programs makes the comparison of the ECOCs difficult. It is, however, an exercise to which many scholars and policy makers (including the EC) pay a lot of attention.

Research is always a process – and, at its best, a process the results of which are unpredictable. Moreover, the phases of the process may also be unpredictable. In spite of meticulous planning, the research process is often influenced by diverse contingencies and coincidences which may open up new pathways, close old ones, and lead one to new areas of interest and more

focused research questions. Research is thus a process which teaches the researcher to see the essentialities of the topic, understand its basis, structures, and broader connections and perceive what kind of views are important to be raised as the topics of discussion for the scientific community.

The research at hand is a compilation dissertation in sociology. In addition to the introductory chapter, it comprises five articles published in peer-reviewed scientific journals between 2010 and 2014. These articles are selected from several publications produced within the research project titled 'Identity politics in Pécs, Tallinn and Turku as European Capitals of Culture (ID-ECC)' funded by the Academy of Finland between 2011 and 2013. The research on the topic was, however, started already in 2007. This compilation dissertation is at the same time a document of the research process and a summary of its main results. The selected articles bring to the fore different kinds of approaches and theoretical points of view on the core theme of the study: identity politics. Their focuses vary from the broader macro level analysis to individual micro level cases. At the same time the selected articles function as documents of the development in understanding the topic of the study, deepening its points of view, and the increased focus of the main concepts. The theoretical discussions in the articles combine aspects from the fields of sociology, European studies, cultural policy research, cultural studies, human geography, and reception studies.

During the first phase of the research process, the main interest of the investigation was in the local policy and promotional discourses. Reading the application books of seven Finnish candidate cities for the ECOC2011 nomination revealed how the definitions and meanings of local, regional, national, and European identities varied, and how they had an essentially flexible nature as concepts: they could be used in diverse ways to promote the city, emphasize its particularity, and/or indicate its international or supranational connections. In addition, the applications revealed how the concept of culture is even more flexible. Depending on the city, it included e.g., sport, education, or food. The concept of culture could be utilized as a tool for diverse purposes. In order to broaden the investigation into the international level, the application books of other recently designated ECOCs – Pécs, Tallinn, Essen, and Istanbul – and some candidate cities from Hungary and Estonia were included in the study. For closer analyses, the case ECOCs were limited to Pécs, Tallinn, and Turku. The analysis revealed both common and differing notions on area-based identities and rhetorical strategies in the meaning-making processes in the case cities. It also enabled broadening the focus of the research to cover other relevant research topics related to identity politics.

In addition to the different area-based identity concepts, in the early phase the research focused on a theme that penetrates the EU policy discourse, the promotional rhetoric at the local level, and the focus of the various cultural events and performances in the three case cities. This theme is intercultural dialogue – to use the term familiar from recent EU policy rhetoric. At the local

level, the theme was usually referred to as multiculturalism. In this study it is generally discussed as cultural diversity. Discussions on the theme have been extremely topical in the societal, political, and cultural sectors of European countries. The investigation of the local policy and promotional discourses raised interest in broadening the research into the EU cultural policy discourses and the identity politics of the ECOC initiative at the EU level.

In order to investigate whether the identity political policy and promotional discourses were transmitted to the grass roots level or whether there was a gap between the EU and the grass roots level, a questionnaire study was conducted among the ECOC audiences in three case cities. The preliminary survey was conducted in Pécs as an online study, after which the questionnaire data was collected using printed forms during the field research periods in the case cities. The field research enabled various discussions with local people, cultural operators, artists, performers, scholars, volunteers, and workers at the management offices of the ECOCs; the participation in different kinds of cultural events: the listening of tens of opening speeches at the ECOC events; and following the regeneration and development projects in the cities. The dissertation includes one article utilizing the questionnaire data. Some of the core results of the questionnaire study, which were published in several separate articles, are summarized in section 3.2 in order to broaden the discussion on the meaning-making of identities at the local level of the initiative. This discussion increases the understanding of the complexity of identity politics in the ECOC initiative and brings to the fore the continuities and discontinuities in the mediation of the identity policies and politics from the EU level to the local level.

The field research in Pécs and Tallinn and the visits to some other ECOCs in the recently joined EU member states led into combining the investigation on identity politics with the exploration of urban regeneration and development practices and discourses. Besides the three case cities, the research discusses the identity politics in relation to urban regeneration in Sibiu (Romania), Vilnius (Lithuania), Maribor (Slovenia), Košice (Slovakia), Riga (Latvia), and Pilsen (Czech Republic). In addition, the field research in the case cities brought to the fore diverse conflicts and contradictions related to the ECOC scheme and its implementation at the local level. One of these conflicts was included in the research project in order to discuss the influence of the ECOC initiative on micro level structures at the grass roots level. All phases of the study have deepened and broadened the understanding of the main focus of the research: identity politics in the ECOC initiative. The results of the research have been reported in numerous articles published along the research process in peer-reviewed international journals and conference proceedings.

## 2.2 THREE CASE CITIES: PÉCS, TALLINN, AND TURKU

The host countries of the three case cities in the study – Hungary, Estonia, and Finland – are geographically located in the eastern and northern borders of the EU. On one hand, the countries have all sought to present themselves as European. On the other hand, in all countries national or nationalist discussions and movements have strengthened during the recent years. Thus, Pécs, Tallinn, and Turku form an interesting group of ECOCs for studying the notions and perceptions of area-based identities and their interdependence. Particularly, the idea of Europeaness and its relation to locality, regionality, and national identity and culture forms a fruitful point of departure for the study.

The three case cities differ from each other in terms of their social, cultural, economic, and political history. However, the cities also have several characteristics in common. In all the cities contemporary art and culture have been developed together with old urban layers through public art, artistic events, new museums, and various other art and cultural institutions as well as new or renewed architecture. The cities have been multicultural and multilingual forces of their regions since the Middle Ages. Two of the cities (Tallinn and Pécs) are located in former socialistic countries, and are thus part of the historical East–West division of Europe. During the last two decades, the East–West perspective has, however, lost its former meaning and the old division has been provided with new – e.g., economic and cultural – content. All three countries are relatively new members of the union. The similarities and differences have had an influence on how the identity politics included in the ECOC initiative have been interpreted and implemented in the cities during their ECOC year (see Lähdesmäki 2013c). Next, the case cities and the main identity political emphases in their ECOC programs are briefly introduced.

Pécs, a city in Southern Hungary with 157,000 inhabitants, was designated in 2006 as one of the ECOCs for the year 2010. The two other ECOCs of the year were Essen (along with a broader Ruhr region) and Istanbul. Pécs and the region around it are known for their multiethnic population and multi-phased history, which have left their marks on the architecture and traditions of the city. Many of the citizens originate from German, Roma, Croatian, or Serbian backgrounds. However, according to the population census of 2011, only 4.2 % of the population identified themselves as (ethnic) German, 2.0 % as Roma, 1.2 % as Croatian, and 0.2 % as Serbian (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal 2013, 119, per cents are based on the data provided in the table 3.1.6.1.). The origins of Pécs are in a Roman city called Sopianae which was founded at the beginning of the 2nd century. During the centuries that followed, it developed into a significant early Christian center. One of the major historical heritage sites of today's Pécs – the early Christian necropolis, which was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2000 – originates from this period. In addition, the city has several architectural heritage sites dating back to the Middle Age and the Ottoman



occupation in the 16th and 17th centuries. The architecture of the city also includes a strong modernist character, due to the active contacts of the local architects with the Bauhaus school in the first half of the 20th century.

Besides having an important architectural heritage, the city is home to various major cultural institutions, such as the national theatre, and special museums, such as the Victor Vasarely Museum. One major cultural product, produced in Pécs since the 1850s, is the Zsolnay porcelain and stoneware. Transformation of the former porcelain factory area into Zsolnay Cultural Quarter was one of the notable regeneration projects of Pécs2010. In general, the ECOC designation of the city was preceded and followed by major regeneration plans, investments in infrastructural reparations, and the construction of new buildings for cultural use. Today Pécs is an active academic center and a cultural and artistic meeting point of the region, just the way it already was in the Middle Ages. The first university in Hungary was founded in Pécs in 1367. The South-Transdanubia around Pécs includes several important wine regions. Due to the history of the region, its environment, and climate, the promotional discourse of Pécs often emphasizes the Mediterranean atmosphere of the city.

Tallinn and Turku were designated in 2007 as the ECOCs for 2011. Tallinn is the capital and the largest city in Estonia with a population of 426,000. The city is located on the Northern coast of the country, on the shore of the Gulf of Finland. The multi-phased history of Tallinn, which includes being subjected to various rulers since the Middle Ages, has influenced the urban character of the city. The Soviet occupation has left its marks on the uses of its urban space and the cityscape. Today 52.5 % of the citizens of Tallinn define themselves as ethnic Estonians and 38.5 % as ethnic Russians (*Statistical Yearbook of Tallinn 2011* 2011, 10). The major cultural attractions of Tallinn are the medieval merchant houses, churches, towers, walls, and streets of the Old Town, which was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997. Around this touristic area spreads out various districts and suburbs, which are characterized by distinguished cultural atmosphere: e.g., the old wooden quarters in Kalamaja have recently started to attract younger bohemian dwellers, the recently renovated and built Rotterman quarter represents the contemporary modern architectural environment, and the massive building blocks in the suburb of Lasnamäe are reminders of the housing ideals of the Soviet era.

Being the capital of Estonia, Tallinn is the location of major national cultural institutions, such as the national museum, theatre, and opera. The venues for these institutions range from historical buildings, such as the Estonia theatre, to recently built cultural sites, such as the Kumu Art Museum. The Russian-speaking minority has their own theatre in the city center. Various nationally important festivals, such as the Estonian Song Festival – the largest amateur choral event in the world – are held in Tallinn. In addition to the traditional and high cultural events, Tallinn has an active alternative cultural scene, which attracts designers, contemporary artists, independent theatre groups, bands,

trend-setters, and other people interested in the experimental, alternative, and new phenomena of contemporary culture. The city of Tallinn has developed its cultural life and creative industries through long-term planning. Since 2004 the city has produced various strategic plans, development programs, and investigations which aim to develop the cultural industries of the city and promote Tallinn as a creative city. The plans for Tallinn's ECOC project formed a part of the broader strategic development process in the city (Lassur, Tafel-Viia, Summatavet & Terk 2010).

Turku, a city with a population of 180,000, is located in South-West Finland. Dating back to the Middle Ages, Turku is the oldest city in Finland. Till the beginning of the 19th century, it was also the most important city in Finland even acting for a couple of years as the capital of the Grand Duchy of Finland, before the capital was transferred to Helsinki. Turku has functioned as an arena for various social and cultural turning points in the Finnish national history. In addition, Finland's first university, The Royal Academy of Turku, was founded in the city in 1640. Nowadays Turku is the regional center of Varsinais-Suomi (often translated as Finland Proper). 5.3 % of the city's inhabitants are part of the Swedish-speaking minority (*Tilastotietojä Turusta* 2011). The location of the city on the shore of the Baltic Sea has had an impact on the history, livelihood, and culture of the inhabitants of the city and the surrounding region.

The cultural scene of Turku is characterized by the multilayered presence of history in the city: e.g., the medieval buildings serve as the main tourist attractions, the renovated old wooden quarters in the district of Port Arthur have become a popular living area, and the modern buildings in the city center represent the construction ideals of the Finnish post-war period. During the decades between the 1950s and the 1980s, the urban environment in Turku was quickly modernized by demolishing old buildings and constructing modern building blocks. The changes of these decades remain a recurring topic of debate in the city. Due to its long history, Turku has a manifold cultural infrastructure that includes various museums, theatres, and concert buildings. The city has a Swedish-language theatre and various other Swedish-language cultural organizations. Several former industrial estates, such as the Manilla Factory, an old rope factory, and old shipyard buildings, have recently been transformed for cultural use. The transformation of a railway engineering workshops as the cultural venue 'Logomo' was one of the major regeneration projects in Turku for 2011. Turku serves as a venue for various regularly organized cultural events, such as the Medieval Market Festival and Ruisrock – one of the oldest rock festivals in Europe organized since 1970. In addition, Turku is known in Finland as the Christmas City. Besides the official and high culture, Turku has an active underground cultural scene which has influenced the avant-garde and alternative art and culture in Finland since the 1960s. For the past years culture has been taken as one of the focuses in the strategic development plans of the city (*Strategy 2005–2008* 2005). The development plans of the ECOC project were

closely related to the broader development plans of the city and the surrounding province (Helander et al. 2006).

The ECOC programs in the case cities followed the same policy guidelines determined by the EU. Thus, the programs had several similar identity political emphases, aims, and interests. During their ECOC year, the cities aimed to promote and foster territorial cultural characteristics and area-based cultural identities. Various ECOC events in the cities focused more or less on bringing to the fore the characteristics of the city, region, nation, and Europe and the cultures of their people. The main themes of the Pécs2010 followed the slogan "Pécs – The Borderless City". As the core pillars of the Pécs's ECOC year, the application book emphasized: lively public spaces, cultural heritage and innovation, multiculturalism, regionalism, and the city as a cultural gateway to the Balkans (e.g., Takáts 2005, 17). In addition to local, regional, and national culture, Europe, Europeaness, and a common European cultural identity were important concepts in the promotional rhetoric of the Pécs2010. The objective of the city was to celebrate e.g., "artistic achievements of European standard" (Takáts 2005, 11), "diversity of European and world culture" (Toller 2005, 7), and "own cultural experience and achievements which are likely to arouse interest in visitors and guests, those aspects of culture which contribute to the heritage of Pan-European culture" (Takáts 2005, 21).

The main objectives of the ECOC year of Tallinn focused on the development of cultural participation, creative economy, international cultural communication, and cultural tourism (Tarand 2006). The identity political aims of the Tallinn2011 were introduced in the application book *Everlasting fairytale, Tallinn....* According to the book, "[a]lthough home to many cultures, Tallinn firmly represents the character of the Estonian people and their land", and thus, "[--] it bares the responsibility of representing the republic and its culture to the world" (Tarand 2006, 11). The representation of Estonian culture and identity was an important identity political emphasis in the application book. The national emphasis was, however, intertwined in the book with the creation and strengthening of Europeaness. As it stated: "Tallinn's leaders envisage the cultural capital as one part of a far-reaching process of transforming urban spaces into cultural centres and introducing Estonian culture to the rest of Europe while helping Estonians create a new European identity" (Tarand 2006, 17). The aim was to familiarize other Europeans with the national culture of Estonia and transform the notions of Europeaness among Estonians. In addition, many of the planned projects aimed to improve the urban environment and cultural infrastructure in the city and develop citizens' ties with and feeling of belonging to their home town. Unlike several other ECOCs, neither the plans nor the promotional material of Tallinn2011 aimed to introduce or 'create' regional culture or identity. The regional elements were present mainly by organizing parallel events in the near-by communes or in other towns around Estonia during the ECOC year.

According to the Turku2011 application book and promotional material, the main goals of the ECOC program were to encourage well-being, internationalism, creative industries, and cultural export (Helander et al. 2006). The program of Turku2011 was organized under five main themes that included: bringing culture into the everyday life, offering cultural breaks from the everyday life, introducing the maritime region surrounding the city, discussing issues related to identities and selfhood, and exploring the city through its history, memories, and stories (Määttänen 2010, 7). Besides local and regional aspects, the ECOC year in Turku aimed to emphasize national culture and Europeanness. As the application book of Turku states: "We have created projects that have far reaching effects and represent the driving edge of the Finnish cultural and business life." (Helander et al. 2006, 7.) In the application book, Europeanness was defined as a value penetrating each project in the program (Helander et al. 2006, 37).

In general, the cultural profiles of the ECOC programs have varied greatly among the ECOCs. The cultural profiles of Pécs2010, Tallinn2011, and Turku2011 also included several contentual differences. In Pécs2010, one of the main focuses of the ECOC program was in the cultural heritage of the city and the regeneration of the urban space through several major restoration and construction projects. In addition, regionalism and multiculturalism were emphasized in the ECOC program. This emphasis was concretized in various events which aimed to bring to the fore regional or 'ethnic' contents. In Tallinn2011, the program aimed to activate the cultural and creative industries in the city. In addition, the ECOC program included nationally important festivals and performances, such as the Estonian Song Festival. In Turku2011, the ECOC program brought to the fore various communal events which aimed to involve local people in the cultural scene of the city and activate the cultural participation in everyday life. The cultural profiles of the ECOCs can be interpreted in various ways, and in the designated cities there have always been various views – even debates and contentions – on what is or what should be the main cultural profile and core contents of the ECOC program.

## **2.3 THE CORE CONCEPTS OF THE STUDY**

The research project comprises several core concepts which penetrate the different disciplines and theoretical approaches used in the investigation. These concepts function as methodological tools with which the focus of the study can be theoretically framed and discussed. In general, concepts are scientific abstractions which aim to show the focus of the investigation from a certain point of view and as a certain kind of phenomenon. Concepts include epistemological and ontological perceptions and notions on knowledge and reality, and thus the selection and the use of certain concepts affects the way the

investigated phenomena are given meanings and made sense of in the research. Concepts are a scientific means to represent the investigated phenomena in an analytical, critical, rethought, and/or re-contextualized frame. In this study, concepts have a crucial role in the analysis of the research data. In the analysis, the contents and meanings of the identity politics are outlined and discussed as they are framed by the epistemologies and ontologies of the core concepts. In the following section, the core concepts of the study are contextualized from the point of view of the recent theoretical discussions and defined in relation to their use in the study.

### **2.3.1 Identity**

Contemporary studies of identity draw upon a wide range of theoretical conceptualizations. Several researchers have discussed and theorized different notions of identities e.g., by describing them as ‘thick’ or ‘thin’ on the bases of their essentialistic or constructivist nature (e.g., Delanty 2003; Axford 2006; Davidson 2008; Terlouw 2012). Thick versions of identities are explained to appeal to the (real or imagined) shared features and qualities of people. The basis of these shared features is often located in common culture, history, and traditions or other concretized and historically narrated characteristics. As opposed to this, thin versions of identities are considered to be formed e.g., on the basis of legal rights, citizenship statuses, constitutions, economic networks, or functional cooperation of administrative units. The nature of thin identities is fluid, and they can be grounded upon open and networked spatial form and project-like organization.

Besides the concept of identity several scholars have been more broadly interested in the ideas of communality and feelings of belonging to a group. In these anthropological, philosophical, and sociological studies, communities have been theorized as ‘weak’ or ‘strong’ based on the type of relations between their members (e.g., Maffesoli 1991; 1996; Margalit 2003; Bauman 1992). In these studies, people’s ties to communities have been described as thin or thick. Strong communities, such as traditional villages or kin communities, are perceived as being built on physical interaction and unanimity of the foundations of the community between its members, while the weak communities are considered to be formed around common voluntary activities, such as hobbies. Unlike in the case of strong communities, weak communities are easy to join and leave. Scholars have, however, emphasized how strong communities and thick ties between their members are neither essentialist, nor innate, nor natural, but also as socially and culturally constructed as weak communities and their thin ties. Thus, all kinds of communities, even face-to-face ones, can be perceived as constructed or ‘imagined’, in the sense of Benedict Anderson (1983).

Depending on the theoretical and philosophical approaches, the notions on the state of the constructedness of identities have varied among scholars. On one

hand, the construction of identities has been perceived as determined by diverse social and cultural practices, orders, and contexts. On the other hand, some scholars have emphasized more subjective and individual points of departure in the construction of identity and communal sentiments. In these views, identities are understood as profoundly flexible categories: they can be utilized for various individual purposes and projects. Several theoreticians of post-modernism in particular have described identities as free creations which are not restricted by socio-cultural categories or systems. In this perspective identities are considered as products of constant and ongoing creation processes, and thus as being in a state of change. In order to emphasize the potential of identities as subjective projects, Zygmunt Bauman (1992) has introduced the concepts of self-constitution and self-assembly. Similarly, Michel Maffesoli (1991) has emphasized the idea and concept of identification rather than identity in order to combine the views on 'weak' forms of communality and people's affective ties to them with the views on subjective identity building processes. In general, the post-modernist views have broadened the theoretical discussion on identities by highlighting identification as a process rather than identity as the result of it.

The constructivist and post-modernist notions on identities have been criticized for their vagueness and uselessness for scientific analysis. The views of Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper (2000) have often been referred to in these critical discussions. According to them, in the studies in humanities and social sciences the concept of identity "tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity)" (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 1). They ask why the 'soft' or 'weak' notions of identity that are routinely characterized as multiple, fragmented, and fluid, should be conceptualized as 'identity' at all (Brubaker and Cooper 2000, 6). However, the constructivist and post-modernist notions on identities have established their position in the academic discussions and theorizations on the formations of communities and communal and subjective feelings of belonging. In this study, identities are approached from the constructivist perspective by emphasizing the cultural and discursive nature of identity projects and their processual and ongoing state. The notions of identity as 'selfhood' and 'sameness' are perceived in the study in a close connection with and influencing the formation of each other. However, the study does not aim to analyze identities at the individual level as a formation of people's subjectivity. The analytical focus is laid on the creation of collective identity projects and the individuals' notions and meaning-making of them.

### **2.3.2 Cultural Identity**

Various epistemological turns – such as the linguistic, narrative, and cultural turns that have characterized humanistic and social scientific studies during the

last decades – have also had an influence on the notions on identity in these fields. Scholars have emphasized identities as discursive processes, in which identities are constantly being produced, varied, and altered in different expressions, representations, and performances (Hall 1990; 1992; Bauman 1992; Bhabha 1994). Identities have also been considered to contain a strong narrative dimension: people tell stories about themselves in order to give continuity to their existence, but narratives also express the public aspects of identity (Delanty & Rumford 2005, 51). Narratives thus have both subjective and collective dimensions. As Steph Lawler (2002, 242–243) points out, “narratives are central means with which people connect together past and present, self and other. They do so within the context of cultural narratives which delimit what can be said, what stories can be told, what will count as meaningful, and what will seem to be nonsensical”. Cultural narratives are powerful in structuring and renewing cultural meanings and, conversely, foreclosing certain kinds of meanings (Lawler 2002, 252). Discursive meaning-making processes and narrativization can be considered as a form of social action, in which diverse ‘mute’ cultural phenomena are operationalized by language, turned into symbolic markers of identities, functionalized as social practices, and related to certain social orders.

Various scholars have emphasized the role of culture in the constitution of identity in relation to discourses and narrativization. Scholars have used the concept of cultural identity to refer to shared historical experiences and cultural codes, which are being repeated in communities through various cultural myths, narratives, and symbols (Hall 1990; Giesen 1991). Besides the emphasis on the experience of unity through these experiences and codes, the concept of cultural identity stresses the significance of distinctions in the construction of identities. Cultural identities are created in a constant dialogue, negotiation, and contest of similarity and difference, sameness and distinction. In these views, diverse cultural phenomena are understood as both manifestations of cultural identities and spaces of negotiations and contests where their contents and meanings are formed. Cultural identities are thus processes taking various forms with respect to a particular time, place, and discourse (Hall 1990; 1992). In the study, local, regional, national, and European identities are understood as discursive cultural identities, which are represented and manifested in diverse cultural phenomena. Cultural phenomena, such as the ECOC events, can be understood as representations of cultural identities and as spaces of negotiations and contests where the contents and meanings of identities are formed. The concept of culture is discussed in the study in a wide anthropological meaning. When discussing ‘cultural events’ in the ECOC program, the concept refers more loosely to the diverse forms of arts and entertainment.

### 2.3.3 Area-based Identity

A city, a region, a nation, and a continent – in the case of this study, Europe – are often discussed and 'imagined' in relation to geography. All these entities have some kind of a territorial shape – boundaries that emerge and exist in various social practices such as culture, governance, politics, and economy and that are instrumental in distinguishing them and their identities from others (Paasi 2009, 467). In political studies and human geography, the connections between collective sentiments and geography are often discussed with the concept of territorial identity (e.g., Paasi 1996a; 2000; Marks 1999). Although the concept of territorial identity is used in recent studies of human geography in a loose way as referring to diverse discursively formed and constructed communities and their representations, the word 'territory' does however refer to a geographical entity that has defined and more or less 'real' territorial and administrative borders.

The cultural identities of cities, regions, nations, and continents can also be defined as area-based – an expression with which the local, regional, national, and European scales of cultural identities are described in this study in order to emphasize their imagined nature and their cultural rather than administrative demarcations. The areas which a city, region, nation, and Europe – and local, regional, national, and European cultural identities – refer to are remarkably abstract and fluid constructions crossing the administrative or fixed borders of territories. Area-based cultural identities can therefore be determined as discursive constructions that get diverse meanings depending on their definer and have flexible content. The same spatial area may function as an arena for multiple, even contradictory, notions of (area-based) identity (see e.g., Massey 1995, 67–68).

Some scholars have made a theoretical distinction between the collective area-based identity of the people living in a particular place and the collective interpretation of the identity of the place itself (Relph 1976; Paasi 2003; 2009, 468–469). In that case, the local identity of the people is considered to be formed by people's awareness of the place or a region and its particular characteristics combined with a feeling of regional cohesion and togetherness among the inhabitants. The communality of the people is intertwined with the identity of a place – the real and imagined qualities of the place and the experiences of them. Thus, in practice the notions and sentiments of the collective area-based identity of the people and the identity of the place are closely linked (Paasi 1996b, 209). For example, a city, its physical and historical features, citizenship of the city, and activities of the inhabitants in the city form a multifaceted unity. Features of the city also define the identity of its inhabitants. As Edward Said has noted, identities are framed and given a background by anchoring them to particular places, landscapes, and environments (Said 1985, 54). In turn, social networks give meanings to places.



The theoretical discussions on area-based feelings of belonging rely on the idea of the multilayeredness of identities – an idea recently discussed in the academia with diverse concepts and from different theoretical points of view in order to describe the ‘overlapping’, ‘nested’, ‘cross-cutting’, ‘mixed’, ‘hybrid’, or ‘co-existing’ nature of identities (see e.g., Delanty & Rumford 2005, 51; Risse 2010, 23–25; Kohli 2000). As Thomas Risse (2003, 76–77) has noted, people hold multiple identities which are invoked in a context-dependent way. People have various different identities which become activated in certain situations or circumstances. The same cultural phenomena, qualities, and issues can be considered as markers of different identities in different situations or circumstances.

Several scholars have pondered how the relations of different area-based identities – or different identity categories in general – can be modeled if people may identify at the same time with several communities (Bruter 2005, 15). Michael Bruter (2005, 16) has approached the topic by pointing out that ‘the subsidiarity principle’ has an equivalent in terms of theory of identities: several identities are coexisting – but they are additive and based on territorial proximity. In this model the individual identity forms the core of the model followed e.g., by local, regional, national, and European layers. The model can be revised by emphasizing the relative strength of each additional layer of proximity: some layers are ‘thicker’ while some others are ‘thinner’. (Bruter 2005, 17.) Moreover, Bruter integrates this model into a more global ‘map’ of identities, which includes also those identities that are not territorially organized. In this ‘star-shape network of identity feelings’, the relative strength of an identity is indicated by the distance from the ‘self’ which is placed in the middle of the model. (Bruter 2005, 19.)

Risse (2003; 2004) has tried to illustrate the multilayeredness of identities with ‘Russian doll’ and ‘marble cake’ models. Especially the ‘marble cake model’ is often referred to in discussions on multi-layered understandings of identities. According to the model, different identities are ‘enmeshed’ and flow into each other in complex and reciprocal ways: there are no clearly defined boundaries between e.g., one’s national identity and one’s Europeanness. As Risse (2003) notes, it might be even impossible to describe what a national identity means without also talking about Europe and Europeanness.

Even though the multilayered conception of identity emphasizes the mixed or ‘enmeshed’ nature of identities, it does not, however, invalidate the significance of discursive processes and narrativization in the construction of identities – quite the opposite. The distinction of the different identities or the distinct layers of an identity, as well as the idea of a fusion or a merging of different identities, are discursively and narratively produced and operationalized in language. Especially the complex, fluid, and unsettled conceptions of identities, such as a European identity, are discursive spaces for the constant and continuous negotiation of their meanings. Thus, as Monica

Sassatelli (2009, 14) has noted, a European identity increasingly takes on a language of becoming, rather than that of a stable and monolithic being.

### **2.3.4 Local, Regional, National, and European Identities**

Since the late 1980s, regions and regionality in particular have received a lot of attention in political and academic discussions (Paasi 2009, 464). In these discussions, locality, regionality, and Europeaness form an interrelated and inter-determined sphere of meanings: European cities and regions are often discursively formed and determined in relation to Europe, and similarly, Europe is being discursively constructed through regions and localities. Several studies have referred to this process as the 'localization of Europe' or the 'Europeanization of the local'. Scholars have also used the concept of 'the Europe of regions' to describe the phenomena where "the 'European' is becoming increasingly 'localized', and simultaneously, the 'local' is clearly being 'Europeanized'" (Johler 2002, 9). In this process, nations and nationalities are considered to be losing their previous position while regions are gaining new importance. The EU-based funding for cities and regions (such as the ECOC designation) has created new possibilities for local and regional agents. The EU policy has established a situation in which regions and cities have to compare themselves not only with other national areas and cities, but also with other regions in other nation-states (Hansen 2002). The EU-level projects in the cities and regions have opened up new possibilities to elaborate them in cultural terms and to rethink their cultural identities. The local level projects and practices and the EU governance are intertwined in manifold ways. Reinhard Johler (2005, 35) has described the specific character of the relation between the local level and the EU with the concept of 'eu-local'.

According to Anssi Paasi (2009, 478), the phrase 'Europe of regions' has been more of a tool of governance 'from above' than a tool of regionalism 'from below', although it is often used to describe the idea (and ideal) of fostering the regionality and strengthening the importance of regions in Europe. In fact, some scholars have suggested that since the current EU is a multilevel system of governance, it is actually incorrect to speak of a Europe of regions and how it would perhaps be more correct to speak of a Europe with regions (Paasi 2009, 477; Vos et al. 2002).

The increased emphasis on regions and regional identities has also been explained in relation to global economy. Scholars have recently emphasized how the international markets and regional political responses to global capitalism generate regionalism and accentuate the significance of regions. Regionalism is in this context a reflection of globalization. (Paasi 2009, 466–467.) In addition, the emphasis on regions in the EU has been related to competition and neoliberalism as fundamental principles in the EU governance (Paasi 2009, 467; Rumford 2000).

At the end of the last century, several sociologists, such as Bauman (1990) and Maffesoli (1996), predicted that nation-states would lose their previous position as producers and maintainers of identities, while nationality would increase its meaning as a private identity project among other such projects. At the same time cultural ties above and beneath the nation-state level, such as religious and ethnic identities, regional strivings, and global and supranational projects, were predicted to strengthen. In addition, the increasing cultural diversity and internal pluralism in the nation-states in the Western world has been interpreted to influence the identity production at national and regional levels. On one hand, scholars have pointed out how supranational structures, transnational interaction, globalization, and the increased 'creolization' (Hannerz 1992; Hall 1995) of culture have caused a backlash of national and ethnic sentiments and of territorial attachments below the supranational level (Shore 1997; Castells 1997; Özkirimli 2005; Banks & Gingrich 2006; Delanty 2008). These global societal and cultural changes have been considered to increase regionalist and nationalist movements and activate interest in fostering and searching for regional and national cultural roots and traditions (Hall 1995; Bonet & Négrier 2011).

On the other hand, non-state-based forms of identification and especially constitutional patriotism have been considered increasingly to replace state-based nationalism (Habermas 2001). According to J. McCormic (2010), identification with Europe has increased along with nations, and an interest in cosmopolitan ideas and global phenomena may, in fact, strengthen the role of Europe as a unifier of Europeans and as a framework for a feeling of belonging. As a consequence of these diverse trajectories, the polarization of area-based identities is increasing: the regional, national, and European identities are getting more pronounced expressions and manifestations.

The idea and contents of the concept of national identity vary in different countries due to their historical and political realities and differences in internal homogeneity or heterogeneity, mono- or multi-linguistic character, religious unity or plurality, or the ethnic composition of the population, etc. In addition, a national identity can be approached by emphasizing the ethnic belonging and togetherness e.g., based on language, common origins or traditions, or by bringing to the fore the membership of a civil society and the participation in it (Smith 1991, 15; Meeseus et al. 2010; Mähönen & Jasinskaja-Lahti 2013, 256). In the latter case, the idea of a national identity is much looser and more easily gained (Meeseus et al. 2010). As cultural identities national identities are transformable, negotiable, and in a constant state of being produced in cultural interaction. Thus the notions on national identity and culture differ among people, groups of people within a country, and between countries. The same applies to all area-based identities. However, the ways of talking and representing a national identity and culture can in the course of time become

discursive traditions, which influence or even determine the idea of a national identity in a country (Saukkonen 1999, 287).

The concepts of European identity and Europeanness have recently been broadly discussed in the academia. As the discussions indicate, the idea of European identity is profoundly complex and contradictory and includes meanings which vary depending on the discursive situations in which the idea is produced, defined, and used. In addition, the idea of a European identity embodies political dimensions due to which the discussions about it have often been included in political agendas both at the national and European levels. As all area-based cultural identities, the idea of Europeanness embodies both distinguishable but in several ways overlapping dimensions of the collective and the individual. Agents shaping the collective discourse considering a European identity take a very prominent position on the crystallization of identity at the individual level (Bee 2008). The EU itself has actively participated in the construction of European identity during the different stages of its history. Several civil and cultural initiatives of the EU, such as the ECOC, have aimed at providing meanings of Europe and the EU for the citizens (e.g., Sassatelli 2002; Bruter 2003; van Bruggen 2006). In addition, local, regional, and national agents participate (or are expected to participate due to the EU's governmental principles in its civic and cultural initiatives) in the meaning-making of Europe, the EU, and a European identity.

In general, several scholars have emphasized the varied views on the conception of European identity: a European identity is often approached in the literature either as a civic (political) or cultural identity emphasizing either the legal status and citizenship, or shared culture, history, heritage, and values as the common base for the creation of identity (Bruter 2003; 2004; Antonsich 2008). Some other scholars have analyzed the dimensions of a European identity with a more detailed categorization. For example, Franz Mayer and Jan Palmowski (2004) recognize five different types of European identities – historical, cultural, constitutional, legal, and institutional – which have been affected by the process of European integration. According to Delanty (2005), ideas about European identity can be perceived as encapsulating cultural, political, moral, pragmatic, and cosmopolitan meanings. The cultural emphasis in the conception of European identity has often been interpreted as a 'thick' version of a European identity, while the 'thin' version of European identity have been perceived to refer e.g., to the ideas of constitutional patriotism and a cosmopolitan notion of European identity (Beck & Grande 2007; Pichler 2008; 2009).

Understanding Europeanness as a thick identity based on a common culture, heritage, and history faces diverse challenges in Europe due to the complex relations of the national interpretations of the past. Topics and histories which some Europeans might consider common for the continent may be dissonant in one way or another for some other Europeans (Ashworth & Graham 1997, 384). The different nationalities may interpret 'Europeanness' or 'European' quite

differently (Risse 2003, 77; Jones & Subotic 2011, 254). For some nationalities a European identity is based more on civic or political understanding, while some others emphasize its cultural notion (Bruter 2005).

Identities are often produced and manifested in order to distinguish oneself from the 'others' and to indicate both similarity and the belonging to a particular community. In this sense, the relation to the conception of national culture or national identity is crucial to the production of Europeaness. The transforming and fluid relations of national and European identification have been much discussed in the academia (e.g., Herrmann & Brewer 2004; Risse 2010). On one hand, a European identity can be perceived as being produced as a negation or reaction to 'national' or 'non-European'. On the other hand, a European identity is perceived as complementary to the national, regional, and local identities of people living in Europe (Breakwell 2004; Risse 2006).

Several scholars have criticized the concept of European identity as too abstract, lofty, and intellectual. These critiques are, however, a consequence of using the national template as a normative model, as Monica Sassatelli (2009, 74) notes. According to her, there is a need for a new way of imagining the relationship between culture, identity, and governance in the investigations of Europeaness. In this study a special focus on the meaning-making and conceptualization of Europeaness is taken in section 3.2, which summarizes the results of the questionnaire study on the notions of area-based identity concepts in the three case cities.

### **2.3.5 Multiculturalism, Interculturalism, and Cultural Diversity**

During the recent decades, Europe has become more and more diverse due to the increasing inner pluralism in the European societies based on global cultural flows, new means of communication and media contents, market economy, immigration, and EU enlargement and mobility policies. In today's societies – which have even been described as superdiverse (Vertovec 2007; Blommaert & Rampton 2011) – pluralism is not only broad but multidimensional and fluid. In a 'complex diversity' (Krauss 2011) characteristics of cultural, ethnic, or national categories become more difficult to perceive. Fluid social ties, statuses, positions, and competences of people complicate the categories and structures of the diversity. During the past decades, European societies have aimed to govern their increasing diversity through national diversity policies, which have different emphases in different societies – and can therefore be described as ranging from multiculturalism to integration and from transnationalism to assimilation (Lähdesmäki & Wagener, forthcoming).

In recent years, Europe has faced a backlash against multiculturalism (Bauböck 2008, 7; Modood & Meer 2012, 190). Nationalist movements and their spokesmen have criticized the increasing diversity in Europe, finding fault particularly with the current immigration policies and the subsequent development of multicultural societies (Vertovec & Wessendorf 2009). Some

core European political leaders have joined the critics by condemning the multiculturalist policies as failed.

The European political organizations, such as the EU and the Council of Europe, have aimed to react to the diversification of the European societies and the entailing societal changes and challenges. Indeed, for a couple of years diversity has been one of the key words in the European policy rhetoric. Besides a popular key word or slogan, it has become an important domain of governance. The political and societal debates over multiculturalism have influenced the EU's and the Council of Europe's current diversity politics and rhetoric. In fact, they seem to have been in a shift in Europe during the recent years. Several recent EU and Council of Europe's policy documents participate in and speed up the shift in the diversity politics by emphasizing the 'intercultural dialogue' instead of multiculturalism as the core focus of the policy rhetoric. The EU has promoted the idea of intercultural dialogue e.g., in the European Commission's European agenda for culture in a globalizing world (2007). Even though the intercultural dialogue is considered in the Agenda "as one of the main instruments of peace and conflict prevention" (EC 2007, 7), it is often approached and discussed in the EU initiatives and policy documents in cultural terms, and its implementation is often narrowed to activities in the field of art and culture. The idea of the need for increasing intercultural dialogue and intercultural competence in the EU member states recurs in several recent cultural and citizenship programs of the union.

Diversity as a cultural and societal condition can be distinguished from the policies of governing diversity (Bauböck 2008, 2). Thus, the reality of multicultural, transcultural, or intercultural practices, communities and cultural phenomena in contemporary European societies does not automatically indicate the implementation of multiculturalism or interculturalism as a political ideology in the administration and governance of diversity. Most of the European societies implement some kind of diversity policies regarding their minorities and immigrants. However, the policies differ greatly between societies. ERICarts report for the European Commission (Wiesand et al. 2008, iv) has indicated that the principles of human, civic, economic, and social rights embedded in the EU directives and agendas have not been implemented in a uniform manner in national legislation or policies on diversity. Moreover, the report concludes that the emergence of "one single model encompassing all national approaches to intercultural dialogue cannot realistically be expected, at present" (Wiesand et al. 2008, v). The conclusion reflects the fact that the diversity in Europe is truly diverse. Differing historical, political and social conditions have produced distinct 'diversity structures' (Saukkonen 2007, 41–54) into European societies.

What kind of theoretical assumptions are the different diversity policies built on? In general, the normative justification of different diversity policies is often outlined in terms of the classical traditions of political theory, such as liberalism,

republicanism, and social democracy (Koenig & de Guchteneire 2007, 5). Over the past decades scholars have also analyzed the governance of diversity in other terms. The basic focuses in these investigations have been in the politics of recognition (e.g., Taylor 1994; Tully 1995) and the politics of citizenship in multicultural conditions (e.g., Kymlicka 1995). According to the basic categorization presented by Charles Taylor (1994, 37–38), the politics of recognition may be approached from two opposing points of view: ‘The politics of universalism’ emphasize that all citizens within a society should have equal rights and entitlements, while ‘the politics of difference’ stress the recognition of distinctness and particularity of each culture and individual identity. Even though the aim of both politics is to increase equality, their contradicting views lead to conflicting interpretations on equal rights and the recognition of difference. The multicultural reality complicates the dynamics of the politics of recognition in many contemporary societies. Will Kymlicka (1995) has emphasized in his investigations how minority rights fit together with the liberal political theory and its interests in individual rights. In his views the ‘internal restrictions’ and ‘external protection’ function as two counterbalances in the politics of diversity. The external protection enables cultural groups to foster their cultural identity without the interference of outer influences or attempts of assimilation, while the internal restrictions prevent the groups from exercising cultural practices which are against the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the liberal society (Kymlicka 1995).

The foundation of multiculturalism as a political idea and a policy has often been explained with theoretical dichotomies. Scholars have for example distinguished between assimilation and acculturation (Barry 2001); moderate and radical (Miller 2000); weak and strong (Grillo 2005); thin and thick (Tamir 1995); and liberal and communitarian politics of multiculturalism (Taylor 1994). Some scholars have categorized the politics of multiculturalism with more detailed strands in relation to political theory. For example, in addition to a multiculturalism of recognition, Rainer Bauböck (2008, 3–7) has distinguished between a multiculturalism of celebration and a multiculturalism of toleration in order to structure the variety of approaches found in the contemporary politics of multiculturalism. According to him, in multiculturalism of celebration cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity is considered as a public good in a society and as a resource in a globalizing world. Multiculturalism of toleration sees a potential conflict in an increasing cultural diversity, and it is therefore considered important to decrease the risk of a conflict. (Bauböck 2008.)

The concept of multiculturalism has been a topic of many recent critical discussions and analyses in the academia. It has been criticized e.g., for emphasizing boundaries instead of their blurring, and for focusing mainly on ethnic and national issues instead of paying attention to the multisectional diversity in societies. The critics have rather discussed the contemporary diversity and its governance with the term of interculturalism. However, several

scholars have recently emphasized that the concepts and policy rhetoric of interculturalism and multiculturalism are discursively fluid and that it is difficult to draw any clear or stable line of demarcation between the two (Levey 2012; Wieviorka 2012). As Taqir Modood and Naser Meer (2012) have pointed out, the qualities, such as encouraging communication, recognition of dynamic identities, promotion of unity, and critique for illiberal cultural practice that are often used to promote political interculturalism, are equally important (and on occasion foundational) features of multiculturalism. Due to the fluid and vague contents of the concepts, the discussions on supplanting multiculturalism by interculturalism have included politicized dimensions (Levey 2012).

Politics is made in language and through discourses. Due to the discursive nature of politics, political innovations are always conceptual and conceptual changes embody politics (e.g., Farr 1989, 31). Political language in the administrative documents does not only describe the reality of the policies, but it participates in their production. Thus, political language is a performative speech act (Austin 1982), even though its explicit claims might not be fulfilled (Mäkinen 2012, 78). The concepts of interculturalism and intercultural dialogue are both political innovations and conceptual changes in diversity policies.

The multilevel pluralism and diversity in contemporary societies is manifested in cultural practices and phenomena. Similarly the diversity policies have an impact on cultural manifestations. The concept of cultural diversity is used in this study to describe the variety and heterogeneity of culture under contemporary conditions. It is understood both as a condition of culture and a cultural discourse which includes a variety of strategies for dealing with the cultural diversity and socio-cultural heterogeneity of societies. The concept of cultural diversity is perceived in the study from a discursive point of view. Understanding the concept and the discussions on cultural diversity in a discursive sense opens views on the meaning-making processes and uses of the idea of cultural interaction or cultural dialogue in the context of the ECOC initiative.

### **2.3.6 Identity Politics**

John Agnew (1997, 249) defines the concept of identity politics as an attempt to establish the recognition of differences of collective identities in cases in which the differences are either not acknowledged or they involve negative evaluations. The concept has been used in various studies in humanistic and social scientific disciplines to describe the political action and discourses of oppressed groups (those who consider themselves oppressed) that aim to advance their interests and existence (Lähdesmäki 2008). The concept is often discussed in reference to entities such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or physical disability, but is also being applied to regional and local strives, which sometimes merge with the first three. Especially the postmodern views have strengthened the individualist identity political projects – or the



'politics of difference' as for example Stuart Hall (1992, 279–280) has called it. During the recent decades the discourses and activities of the so-called new social and political movements have included explicit identity political attempts aiming to establish or 'normalize' their emancipatory identity projects and position in the society (Agnew 1997).

At the national level, the concept of identity politics may comprise both general politicized discourses on the formation of a (national) identity and policies of political institutions related to the functions and actions of the state (Saukkonen 1998, 220). The core focus of the identity politics of nation-states is in the attempts to link the notion of a cultural and genealogical national community with the state and its societal features. Thus, the identity politics of nation-states aim to emphasize – or create – internal unity, external distinction, and temporal continuity in a national frame. (Saukkonen 1999, 73; Saukkonen 1998, 218–219). Similar views can be applied to the notions on identity politics at the EU level: it is about politicized discourses and policies on Europeanness aiming to strengthen and establish its positive meanings, normalize it as a source of (cultural) identification and feeling of belonging among Europeans, and relate it to the European organizations and their administration and governance. The attempts to fill the concept of Europe with meaning involve elements of power and repression in which alternative articulations are ruled out, as Anders Hellström (2006, 20) notes.

Whatever the focuses of identity politics are, its political aims may be pronounced explicitly or implicitly i.e., as hidden in political rhetoric and intertwined subtly with the political argumentation and action. The EU's identity politics on Europeanness is both explicit and implicit, as this study indicates. Even though identity politics usually includes emancipatory goals or aims to strengthen the positive ethos of belonging, they may also include exclusive, restrictive, and hierarchical dimensions (Saukkonen 1999, 67). Collective identities are often produced through the mechanism of exclusion and defined in relation to the 'Other' – a negation of 'us'.

The core point of departure for identity politics is the constructivist notion of the concept of identity: the construction of identities can be conscious and goal-orientated. Another crucial point of departure for identity politics is the significance of identities in political, social, and economic action. Thus the constructivist notion of the concept of identity does not only indicate the understanding of 'self' or 'community', but also allows the possibility to act in order to obtain and ensure certain aims and interests. (Saukkonen 1998, 220–222.) In this study, the concept and the idea of identity politics is perceived in a broad sense as referring to how identities (and discourses, narratives, representations, and cultural manifestations of them) are produced, defined, and used for certain purposes at the local, regional, national, and EU levels.

## 2.4 DATA AND METHODS

In order to obtain a manifold view to the identity politics in the ECOC initiative, the research data consist of diverse materials produced at the EU and local levels.

*The EU policy documents* used in the study represent different EU policy levels. The focus of the policy documents in the data is in the ECOC initiative including the decisions on the initiative, instructions for the candidate cities, reports of the selection panels, and official ex post evaluation reports. The upper level policy documents include e.g., the Treaty of Lisbon and the European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World. The web site of the European Commission and its texts on the ECOC initiative and EU cultural policy has been included in the data.

*The planning and promotional material* at the local level comprises application books, programs and preliminary program plans, plans of various regeneration projects, promotional leaflets and brochures, and the official web pages of the selected ECOCs. Both the texts and images in the material have been included in the analysis.

*Observation* in the ECOCs during the field research periods broadened the data with first-hand experiences of the contents of the ECOC events, their arrangements, and promotion e.g., in local advertisements and opening speeches. In addition, the diverse regeneration, reparation, restoration, and construction projects and their impacts on urban space and people's everyday life were observed. Information obtained through informal discussions with local people, cultural operators, artists, performers, scholars, volunteers, and workers at the management offices of the ECOCs have been used in the study. The observation occurred as a byproduct while conducting research in the case cities and was therefore not systematic or structured. The observation was documented by photographing the transformation of the public spaces, the regeneration and construction projects, and the cultural participation and behavior of the ECOC event audiences. The discussions with diverse people were documented by taking notes.

*The social media discussions and Internet sites* of local activists criticizing the ECOC designation and program of Turku2011 form a more focused part of the data. This data includes texts in several discussion forums, posts to the comment forums of local newspapers, blog posts, Facebook pages, and videos. In the data collection, the online sites were observed virtually during the ECOC year.

*The questionnaire data* on the audience reception of the ECOC events was gathered in the case cities during the field research. The questionnaire study focused on the respondents' notions on the representations of area-based (local, regional, national, and European) cultural identities in the ECOC events. The data comprises altogether 1425 responses (200 from Pécs, 293 from Tallinn, 400 from Turku, and 532 online responses to a preliminary survey from Pécs). The

data collection for the questionnaire study took place in Pécs in April, May, and October 2010, in Tallinn in May 2011, and in Turku in August 2011. The questionnaire data was collected in 23 events in Pécs, 17 in Tallinn, and 21 in Turku. The selected events differed greatly in their size (mass events, small-scale events), location (indoors, public space, city center, suburbs), organization (free of charge, at a charge), target audience (age, gender, ethnic, and language groups) and genre. Some of the selected events were festivals or series of events including various types of performances. The aim of the event selection was to include an extensive range of events, which would represent the variety of the whole ECOC program in the case cities. The program of Turku included altogether 155, Tallinn 251, and Pécs 324 projects. However, the total number of separate events in the cities was much higher since many of them covered various types of smaller events and performances. From three to thirty responses were collected from each event, depending on the size of the event. In addition, responses were collected online in Pécs from the end of February till the end of May 2010. The implementation of the questionnaire study is discussed in more detail in the article '*Discourses of Europeanness in the reception of the European Capital of Culture events: The case of Pécs 2010*'.

The respondents were asked whether they considered that the area-based identities were or should be represented in the ECOC events and in case they did, how were they or how should they be represented. The design of the questionnaire was based on the diverse and multifaceted meanings of the key area-based identity concepts. The concepts were not explained or defined in the questions: the respondents were instructed to concretize and describe the concepts in responses to open questions according to their own understanding. However, the context of the study (i.e. the focus on cultural events) directed the respondents to perceive the concepts as cultural identities (and not e.g., in the sense of citizenship or civic status). The questions were based on an assumption that identities can be in some way represented by cultural phenomena, cultural interaction, and cultural communication. At the same time this assumption forms the fundamental basis for the whole ECOC initiative: the initiative has aimed to foster and bring to the fore local, regional, and European cultures and identities through the cultural offerings in the ECOCs. A more detailed qualitative analysis of the responses from each case city and a statistical comparison between the results from the three cities have been presented in separate articles (see Lähdesmäki 2011; 2013b; 2013c; 2014b; forthcoming a). Section 3.2 summarizes the main results of the questionnaire study from the three case cities, emphasizing particularly the notions on European identity. The more detailed investigation of the questionnaire data is not included in this dissertation.

Similar data collection process regarding the planning and promotional material, questionnaires, and observations was conducted in all case cities. In general, different data types bring to the fore different aspects of identity politics

within the ECOC initiative. The data covers various scalarly levels, social and societal layers, and roles and agencies within the initiative thereby giving a comprehensive image of the included identity projects. In addition, the multifaceted data enables the use of various methods in the analysis.

In the study, the data has been analyzed with qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed methods enable a holistic understanding of the topic. Combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in the analysis of the data fits the multi- and interdisciplinary points of departure of the research. In the study, the quantitative methods are used to analyze the questionnaire data.

The data in the articles selected for this dissertation is analyzed with qualitative methods. The chosen methods emphasize the role and significance of language and other symbolic orders as a means and a place where the cultural, social, and political meanings are produced and mediated. The theoretical basis of the used methods is in social constructionism, which emphasizes reality as a construction produced in language, interaction, and social practices. The fundamental point of departure in social constructionism is the idea of non-reflectivity: language and its use are not assumed to reflect external reality, but are instead perceived as inseparably intertwined (Gergen 1985; Potter & Wetherell 1989). The point of view founded on the idea of the intertwined nature of reality and language has been applied in the frame of social constructionism with a variety of different emphases. These emphases range between two poles: according to some views there are non-discursive worlds outside the sphere of language, while other views stress that the world can only be perceived as structured and sensible through language. The former view has been called as weak, contextual, or ontological constructionism and the latter view as tight or epistemic constructionism (Sarbin & Kitsuse 1994; see also Lähdesmäki 2007, 53). According to the weak view, the material world exists regardless of symbolic orders, such as representations and language, even though the symbolic orders make sense and give meanings to the world. From the perspective of the strong view, it is impossible to access and be in a 'direct' connection with the world, because the relationship is always mediated by symbolic structures of meaning, such as language – or there is an 'epistemic distance' between us and the world, as Charles W. Tolman (1994, 19) describes the relation. In the strong view, the focus of the investigations is on the social constructions as such, and the discussions on the 'reality' of these constructions are not considered relevant (e.g., Potter 1996). The point of departure for this study relies on the strong understanding of social constructionism: symbolic orders and linguistic meaning making processes in particular are perceived as fundamental in the production, manifestation, and interpretation of identities and identity politics.

In this study, the previously defined concepts are used as instruments of discussing and making sense of the identity projects, identity politics, and the complex and constructed nature of identities in general. The concepts function

as bridges between the theories which frame the focus of the study and methods which are used in the analysis of the empirical data. Through the concepts the chosen theoretical points of view have been merged with the points of departure and the implementation of the analysis – and after the analysis, the concepts are used in order to draw broader conclusions of its results.

The main qualitative method used in the study is discourse analysis. Because discourse analysis includes several fundamental premises, scholars have described the method both as a methodological and theoretical frame of reference (Potter & Wetherell 1989, 175; Philips & Hardy 2002). Besides social constructionism, these premises comprise suppositions on contextuality (discourses are socio-cultural, situational, and historical), functionality of language (the language use is an act and produces action and consequences), and coexistence of different discourses (discourses form hierarchical structures in relation to each other) (see e.g., Potter & Wetherell 1989; Parker 1999).

The concept of discourse can be defined in different ways. On one hand, scholars have used it to refer to the restricted ways of producing meanings in and through a certain kind of language use and social practices. On the other hand, the concept has been applied to explain larger societal structures that have an impact on various domains in societies and are manifested as similar kinds of strivings, values, ways of thinking, and actions (van Dijk 1997). Sometimes the broader understanding of the discourse has been referred to with the concept of discourse order (van Dijk 1997, 1–4). In addition, in this broader sense, the concept of discourse is close to the sociological use of the concept of ideology (Hall 1992; Pennycook 1994) or the idea of an episteme, as discussed by Foucault (1970). For Foucault, certain kinds of configurations of knowledge and underlying assumptions regarding what is ‘true’, ‘good’, and ‘proper’ produce a kind of an ‘epistemological unconscious’ of an era that encompasses a wider range of discourses in culture, education, science, politics, law, moral, etc. (Foucault 1980, 194–198).

In this study the concept of discourse is used in both the specific and the broad societal meanings. The closer context of the analysis indicates the terms of reference in which the concept is used. In the analysis of the data, the concept refers to the data-specific and restricted meaning of the discourse, while in the discussion on the ideological, political, and societal connections of the results, the concept is used in a broader sense.

Norman Fairclough has pointed out that the concept of discourse is often narrowly understood as referring only to a linguistic or textual phenomenon, even though the concept comprises all symbolic meaning-making processes – including e.g., visual and performative processes. Therefore, he has used, in some of his studies, the concept of semiosis instead of discourse in order to emphasize the multimodality of symbolic orders and ‘languages’ (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer 2002; Fairclough 2004a; Fairclough 2004b). In addition to spoken and written languages, discourses may appear as ‘ways of being in the world’

and materialize as objects (Fairclough 2004a). In this study, discourses are analyzed as a part of the data which comprises textual, visual, spatial, material, and performative 'languages'. Thus, the outlined discourses in the study are not only textual phenomena, but also e.g., spatial, sensorial, behavioral, and performative, as the article '*Discourses of Europeanness in the Reception of the European Capital of Culture Events: The Case of Pécs 2010*' indicates.

Critical emphasis in the discourse analysis stresses linguistic choices as a use of power (Foucault 1972; Fairclough 1992b, 8–9; 2001a, 36–63). The main focus of critical discourse analysis is on power hierarchies, modes of dominance and oppression, and ideologies that are used to justify the use of power. In the frame of critical discourse analysis, ideology can be understood as a combination of constructions, representations, and claims about reality that are inherent in the discourses and participate in the production, establishment, and maintaining of power relations. At their strongest, ideologies are perceived as taken-for-granted and naturalized as 'common sense'. (Fairclough 1992b, 87; 1995a, 36; 1995b, 63–64; 2004a.) Ideologies are attached to language, semantics, linguistic utterances, and the structures of discourses and social practices in manifold ways. Thus the contests of competing discourses often include ideological battles (Fairclough 1992b, 85–86). A core motive and aim of critical discourse analysis is to make transparent the existence of ideologies, the naturalization of certain discourses, the emergence of taken-for-granted meanings, and the power mechanism intertwined with the discourses (Fairclough 1995a, 132–133). These aims also determine the study at hand.

In practice, the discourse analysis is an attempt to perceive and explain the connections between micro-level symbolic expressions and macro-level socio-cultural structures in order to understand their mutual interaction and interdependence. The meanings of linguistic utterances, representations, or social action are not perceived in the analysis only as 'local' or situational: each micro-level expression participates in the production and reproduction of the macro-level social-cultural structures and practices. Similarly the macro-level forms the frames in which the micro-level expressions are possible to take place. (Fairclough 1995a, 35.) In this study discourse analysis is used as the main method in the following articles: '*Rhetoric of Unity and Cultural Diversity in the Making of European Cultural Identity*', '*European Capitals of Culture as Cultural Meeting Places – Strategies of Representing Cultural Diversity*', '*Discourses of Europeanness in the Reception of the European Capital of Culture Events: The Case of Pécs 2010*', and '*Cultural Activism as a Counter-Discourse to the European Capital of Culture Program: The Case of Turku2011*'. In these articles the analysis of the data has followed Fairclough's (1995) model of discourse analysis that consists of three intertwined layers: the text (understood in a broad Barthesian sense), the discourse practice (comprising diverse practices of producing and receiving the texts), and the socio-cultural practice (which in the contexts of the articles cover e.g., the EU policy and politics and cultural, social, and political characteristics at

the local, regional, and/or national levels). The articles aim to bring to the fore the interaction and interdependence of these layers in the data. The outlining of the discourses in the articles is based on the analysis of the empirical data, except in the article *'Discourses of Europeanness in the Reception of the European Capital of Culture Events: The Case of Pécs 2010'* in which the discourses are theory-based.

Besides discourse analysis, the study utilizes a more general and broader qualitative approach to the data. This approach is defined in the study as 'close reading'. Close reading is a broad category of interpretative explorations, which enable a researcher to carry out a detailed analysis of phenomena on semantic, structural, and cultural levels. It is associated with the critical history produced by the New Criticism in literary studies (DuBois 2003, 2), aiming at "mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its meanings" (Brummett 2010, 3). Conceptually, close reading refers to the analysis of words and the interpretation of texts. However, researchers have applied close reading to various other phenomena, such as media texts, images, films, games, and environments (see e.g. Grant, Sloniowski & Nichols 1998; Bizzocchi & Tanenbaum 2011; Stables 2006). The aim of close reading is to highlight meanings, their structures, and the contexts in which they are produced as they can be found in the data. Close reading thus shares similar goals and motives with discourse analysis. In this study, close reading is used as the main method in the article *'European Capital of Culture Designation as an Initiator of Urban Transformation in the Post-Socialist Countries'*. In the article, the planning and promotional material from several recent and forthcoming eastern European ECOCs is analyzed by using close reading as an instrument of the critical hermeneutic interpretation of meanings given to the transformation of urban space.

The questionnaire data has been analyzed with quantitative and qualitative methods. In section 3.2, the open responses on Europeanness in the questionnaire data are investigated through qualitative thematic analysis (see e.g., Taylor & Bogdan 1984; Boyatzis 1998; Seidman 1998; Patton 2002). In the thematic analysis, distinct themes are defined as units derived from patterns such as "conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, or folk sayings and proverbs" (Taylor & Bogdan 1984, 131). A theme might be expressed in "a single word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph or an entire document" (Zhang & Wildemuth 2009, 310). In thematic analysis, the focus of the study is on an expression of certain meaningful ideas (Minichiello et al. 1990) recognized from the data through the researcher's careful examination and constant comparison between linguistic patterns. (For a more detailed application of the method see Lähdesmäki 2011; 2013b; forthcoming a.) The aim of the thematic analysis in the research at hand was to structure the 'polyphonic' nature of the responses in order to understand how the representations of Europeanness were interpreted in the ECOC events. As a result of the analysis,

common themes and recurrent response types were identified: in the responses certain ways to interpret the representations of Europeanness were more common than others. In the analysis, similar kinds of responses were arranged under a unifying theme. After the qualitative thematic analysis the identified themes were quantified in order to get an idea of their frequency. In the quantification, each identified theme was given a code number and the responses to the open questions were coded according to these numbers.



# *3 The European Capital of Culture Initiative at the Local Level*

## **3.1 CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN AIMS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The EU has imposed the ECOC initiative with manifold goals which aim to produce diverse positive influences in the designated cities. These goals have not always been realized at the local level. In this section, the implementation of the ECOC initiative is discussed by bringing to the fore diverse contradictions and conflicts it has brought forth. Many of these contradictions are based on different kinds of notions on 'whose' project the ECOC eventually is, and how it is used for 'common' and 'communal' purposes.

In the EU policy rhetoric, the starting point of the ECOC initiative is in increasing 'mutual acquaintance' (Decision 1419/1999/EC) and 'mutual understanding' (Decision 1622/2006/EC) between citizens and fostering the positive feeling of belonging. At the local level, the goals of the initiative are transformed into more detailed policy aims focusing e.g., on strengthening social well-being, intercultural dialogue, communality, cultural industries, tourism, urban development, etc. In addition to the positive and elevating goals and policy rhetoric of the initiative, the ECOC designation has caused manifold tensions, debates, confrontations, and disputes over the cultural production and management, economics, communality, and transformation and meanings of urban space in various cities. These tensions and disputes reflect the existence of deeply rooted power hierarchies between different operators, such as political parties, decision-makers, city authorities, the ECOC managers, cultural managers of the local cultural institutions, cultural agents and artists, diverse local interest groups, and local citizens. Particularly from the point of view of critical citizens, local interest groups, and cultural agents and artists, the ECOC managers, authorities, and decision-makers in the cities are believed to be trying to dominate or control the contrasting or alternative views and the attempts to implement them.

A common source of contradictions and disputes in the ECOCs has been the content and profile of the official ECOC program. Because the ECOC initiative is

often discussed in the local policy rhetoric as a common project and endeavor for the whole city – or even for the region or the nation – several local and regional cultural operators and artists expect them to be included in the implementation of the program. Even though the cultural programs have been planned in cooperation with diverse cultural stakeholders in the recent ECOCs, all interested cultural operators, groups, or institutions cannot be included in the planning and implementation. In the recent ECOCs, management offices have aimed to take into account the grass roots level cultural activity in the cities by launching open projects calls in which anybody can suggest cultural projects to be funded and included in the official program. However, many planned and proposed projects have not been selected to the official programs and therefore have not been executed due to the lack of funding and facilities. The selection processes have caused disappointment among rejected applicants and therefore created dissatisfaction and frustration towards the planning and implementation of the program. Many grass roots level cultural operators in the cities have particularly criticized the emphasis and funding of the big and expensive high cultural projects and projects initiated by established cultural institutions.

Due to the tensions and contradictions related to the content and profile of the official ECOC program, the preparation and management of the ECOC year has faced a lot of criticism from cultural operators and local citizens. Related to the ECOC management, the financing policy of the cultural year has also been criticized in various previous ECOCs (see e.g., Boyle & Hughes 1991; Rommedvedt 2009, 4–5). Disputes on financing have also politicized the tensions in the cities. In general, in many designated cities the planning and implementation of the ECOC year has been involved in the local political power struggles (see e.g., Palmer 2004a, 23). In some ECOCs, local politicians have aimed to influence the management of the cultural year both in relation to the economic and cultural content, in order to increase their political popularity and weight in the city. Changes in the local political scene and in the administration of the ECOC management offices have caused discontinuity in the planning of the program and uncertainty of the possibilities of implementing the plans, as happened e.g., in the cases of Tallinn and Pécs (see critical discussions on the implementation of the Pécs2010 e.g., Takáts 2011; Somlyódy 2010).

Besides electrifying the local political scene, the ECOC designation influences political dynamics at the broader national level and between other candidate cities in the host country. In many EU member states, the major cultural life is concentrated in the capital. The battle for the role of the ‘second most important city’ is often fought between several cities much smaller in terms of population, cultural infrastructure, and cultural budgets. The ECOC designation is a concrete means to gain credibility in the competition and stress the importance of the city in the national hierarchy of cities (Lähdesmäki 2011). Stressing the city as ‘European’ due to the designation functions as an instrument for the

attempts to relocate the cities 'higher' in the hierarchy (Heikkinen 2000, 212). While the ECOC designation is often discursively defined in the non-capital ECOCs as having national and European significance, in capitals and other large cities in the host country, the designation of a (competing) city is sometimes seen as having mainly local or regional significance. Thus, the cultural year and its events may only get little media attention in national media or the local media in other cities. Limited media attention of the ECOC events in other cities may reflect the hierarchical and competitive positions between the cities in the host country.

The ECOC designation has been used in various cities as a tool for renewing city image and branding it with culture. The reimagining of cities and the branding rhetoric has been considered artificial and pretentious by citizens in several ECOCs (e.g., Boland 2010). The city image is never intersubjectively shared (Jansson 2003), and the attempts to influence individual notions on the city may therefore be experienced as gestures of control. The diverse regeneration, preparation, and construction projects in the ECOCs have an important role in the image building and city branding. The transformation projects of the urban space have been objected to in several ECOCs. Especially with major projects, many citizens have felt unable to influence the transformation of the city and have therefore felt ignored in relation to matters that are closely related to their everyday life. Even though in the planning and promotional rhetoric the citizens appear as stakeholders in the urban development, the civil participation in the planning of the development and transformation projects has, however, often been subordinated by top-down planning and decision making. Therefore the development and transformation projects in the ECOCs have been publicly objected and acted against. For example in Tallinn, the major plans for developing the previously closed and declined seashore area into a lively public space for cultural, leisure, and residential use caused tensions between city authorities and local people. Several urban activists and interest groups were concerned by the plans to develop a large residential and port area on the seashore. Some artistic projects, such as the 'Kalarand', which were implemented during the ECOC year, aimed to draw attention to the use of land in the seashore area and the significance of the area for the construction of communality in the city. The residents of the near-by district contested the regeneration plans.

In her study on Sibiu's ECOC year, Ana-Karina Schneider (2008, 33) has compared the urban space in the ECOC to a palimpsest. During the ECOC year, the public spaces in the city are turned into stages for diverse cultural and communal events and filled with new layers of meanings embracing the palimpsest condition of the city. The palimpsest nature of the urban space is not limited only to the physical or material environments. New layers of meanings are created discursively and in diverse representations in the promotional material of the ECOCs (Lähdesmäki forthcoming b). Space is always in the

process of being made – in a state of being perceived and signified from distinct points of view (Massey 2005, 9). The city is comprised of a variety of different meaning-making patterns and interpretations. Different interest groups in the city may have their own discourse and ‘language’ in order to make sense of the urban space and thus create their ‘own’ city in the same geographical location (Pohjamo 2011). The different ways of perceiving and interpreting the meanings of the city and the diverse notions on the uses of the urban space have activated tensions in the previous ECOCs. In some cases the tensions have produced local movements and interest groups aiming to influence the meaning-making and uses of the city and its public spaces, as the final article in this study indicates.

### **3.2 INTERPRETING REPRESENTATIONS OF AREA-BASED CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE EVENTS**

The aim of this section is to summarize the main results of the questionnaire study implemented in the three case cities. The results of the questionnaire study have been and will be published in separate articles in different journals. The fundamental aim of the questionnaire study was to investigate how the identity political aims of the EU are mediated to the local level and to the reception of the ECOC events among their diverse audiences. The starting point in the study was in the hypothesis that many of the ECOC events discuss and deal with issues which could be associated with local, regional, national, or European culture and identity. The EU policy rhetoric and promotional rhetoric in the designated cities brought to the fore the ECOC events in connection with these area-based cultures and identities. Moreover, in the cities the diverse cultural projects and performances were introduced in local media, advertisements, opening speeches, and the contents of the events as local, regional, national, and/or European. Thus, the ECOC initiative gave the events an identity political frame of interpretation, which directed the planning and implementation of the events and most likely also their reception. In the open responses of the questionnaire, many respondents repeated the slogans and expressions used in the official promotional rhetoric of the ECOCs.

Analysis of the closed responses in the questionnaire indicated that in the case cities the EU’s identity political aims for the ECOC initiative were fulfilled from the point of view of audience reception: the audiences did perceive the representations of locality, regionality, and Europeaness in the ECOC events. Especially the representations of Europeaness were generally perceived to a high degree. In Turku and Tallinn, Europeaness was considered to be the most represented and in Pécs the second most represented concept in the events. Even though the EU policy rhetoric in the ECOC initiative does not focus on bringing national culture to the fore, it was in Pécs the most and in Tallinn and Turku –

after Europeanness – the second most perceived concept in the events. Representations of regionality were less perceived in the events and considered as the least important concept to be brought to the fore.

Responses to the closed questions revealed that in all the case cities, national culture invoked the most positive impressions and it was considered as the cultural identity on which the ECOC events should particularly focus. However, responses to the open questions revealed it to have nuanced and even controversial meanings. On one hand, national culture was defined as involving a positive patriotic ethos and thus having a profoundly important role to play in strengthening the national feeling of belonging and in maintaining national cultural particularity. On the other hand, it was considered to refer to certain negative values and qualities, such as a narrow-minded national ethos, which many of the respondents wanted to overturn. In the latter case, Europeanness was often seen as a positive element that could renew the content of national culture. (Lähdesmäki 2013c.)

In the closed questions, Europeanness invoked the second most positive impressions (only the third most positive in the paper data from Pécs). As in the case of national culture, in the open responses the concept also took on more controversial meanings. Some respondents who strongly emphasized the importance of national culture in the ECOC events interpreted Europeanness as a threat to it. In the responses in which Europeanness was more positively viewed, it was often contrasted with the recent history and its impacts on the societal and political climate in the case countries. Particularly in Estonia and Hungary, being a part of Europe and its economic, social, and cultural sphere was often discussed in relation to the country-level societal changes.

Various factors may explain the positive attitudes towards Europeanness among most of the respondents and their views on the importance of representing it in the ECOC events. In the case of Pécs and Tallinn, the results can be interpreted in the context of the countries' societal and political history. After the collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern European countries, 'European' identity was often brought to the fore when the nations aimed to detach themselves from their socialist identities. In this context 'European' referred to adapting the legal system, institutions, and economy to the principles of Western European countries and the EU. (Kolankiewicz 1993, 106–107.) Similar adapting was needed when Hungary and Estonia joined the EU in 2004. In addition, Estonia joined the Eurozone in 2011 which was referred to in several responses regarding Europeanness in the questionnaire study. On one hand, the strengthened connections to the European polity, increased public discussions on European issues, and the expectations regarding the EU and Eurozone memberships may have influenced the reception of the ECOC events in Pécs and Tallinn. On the other hand, the rise of the nationalist movements in the case countries during recent years may have encouraged some respondents to particularly stress the 'European dimension' in the reception of the ECOC

program as a counter-discourse to the nationalist climate. In the questionnaire responses from Pécs and Tallinn, the European identity was relatively often discussed in relation to the EU and with pride and feeling of importance of being part of the union. In these responses Europeanness could be seen as something that manifests a better living standard, order, and a higher level of quality in various sectors of society. However, in several responses Europeanness was also approached from an opposite point of view by considering it a bureaucratic force with which a national entity must contend in order to make its significance clear. Besides Pécs and Tallinn, this kind of attitude recurred in the responses from Turku.

The national emphasis in the reception of the ECOC events in the case cities were in contrast with the main aims of the EU for the ECOC initiative. The national emphasis in the reception of the ECOC events may result from the fact that it is a profoundly traditional and institutionalized collective identity in nation-states. It is still commonly referred to in diverse discussions on cultural phenomena. In addition, the national emphasis in the responses can be interpreted in the context of the current political climate in Hungary, Estonia, and Finland and more generally in Europe. Nationalist strivings have strengthened in the continent while the EU has faced severe constitutional and economic crises, which have shaken the base of the European integration process in various policy sectors (Calhoun 2009). Debates on nationalism were particularly timely in Hungary during the data collection because of the parliamentary election in the spring of 2010. The election was preceded by active political campaigns in which right wing parties with their conservative and nationalistic rhetoric received strong media attention. The tension caused by the election and the victory of the right wing parties was also reflected in the reception of the ECOC events in Pécs: political points of view and nationalistic rhetoric were present in several responses (Lähdesmäki 2011). During the recent years, nationalist movements have influenced the identity political discussions in Finland as well. In Estonia, the national and nationalist discussions have been active since the end of the Soviet occupation.

Discourse analysis of the open responses on the area-based identity concepts indicated how these concepts are closely linked and determined by the interrelations or negations of each other. On one hand, the respondents emphasized these identities as multilayered and 'thin' categories, which are interrelated and integrated in several ways. On the other hand, the respondents perceived the area-based cultural identities, especially locality and national culture, as 'thick' and essentialistic categories which were clearly distinguished and should be kept separate. In Pécs, there were more respondents who strongly emphasized the distinction rather than integration of the different area-based identity concepts, while in Turku the idea of the integration of the concepts was stronger. In Tallinn, the relation of the different notions on the concepts was

more even; however, the idea of the integration of the concepts was slightly stronger. (Lähdesmäki 2013c.)

Quantitative analysis of the data indicated that certain background factors, such as gender, age, and education, influenced the notions and interpretations of the representations of area-based cultural identities in the ECOC events. Men and people in their thirties seemed to be generally more critical, skeptical, or less interested in the representations of the area-based cultural identities. The less educated respondents seemed to more easily recognize and emphasize the importance of the representations of those area-based identities which were 'close' to them, such as locality and regionality, while the more educated respondents recognized more easily the representations of a more abstract and broader identity category: Europeanness. According to the responses, identification with a certain area-based cultural identity helped to interpret its representations from the cultural events. (Lähdesmäki 2013c.)

Quantitative analysis of the data also revealed that the increase in the respondents' educational level and activity in cultural participation increased the diversity of the respondents' interpretations of the representations of area-based cultural identities in the ECOC events. In addition, the respondents in higher social positions were more able to describe their interpretations in more diverse ways. On one hand, the results may indicate that the respondents with a lot of so-called 'cultural capital' were better able to recognize and were more familiar with the diverse representations of area-based cultural identities in the ECOC events. On the other hand, the results may indicate that these respondents were more competent and motivated to verbalize their notions on and interpretations of the representations of area-based cultural identities. (Lähdesmäki 2014b.)

In general, the results of the questionnaire study indicate that the area-based cultural identities are profoundly meaningful to people, and international cultural mega-events, such as the ECOC, are expected to represent them both directly in the contents of the events and indirectly in the organization and promotion of them. Area-based cultural identities function as categories through which people structure their cultural perceptions and notions on cultural differences.

The EU's key identity political focus in the ECOC initiative is on producing or fostering the idea of a European identity or Europeanness. How is the European identity understood at the local level? Monica Sassatelli (2009, 129–131) has investigated the topic by interviewing key informants (program directors, project managers, artists, curators, and local stakeholders) in the nine ECOCs for the year 2000. According to her study, the majority of the interviewees responded positively to the questions about the existence of European culture and identity. The idea that Europe should be the focus of the ECOC initiative and its implementation was never challenged. (Sassatelli 2009, 135.) Sassatelli notes, however, that the interviewees seemed to have difficulties

to verbalize the idea of European culture or identity in a way that would have satisfied them. How did the ECOC audiences in Pécs, Tallinn, and Turku verbalize the representations of Europeanness in the ECOC events?

The open responses to the questionnaire study brought to the fore diverse ways of perceiving the representations of Europeanness and understanding its essence. As a result of the analysis, the common themes and recurrent response types were identified and quantified. The identified themes inevitably overlap. The thematic quantification of the responses was content-based, not respondent-based. Thus, a response from one respondent might comprise several, also contradictory, ways to explain the representation of Europeanness. The most common themes recurring in the responses to the questions ‘In your opinion, how is Europeanness represented in the European Capital of Culture events?’ and ‘In your opinion, how should Europeanness be represented in the European Capital of Culture events?’ are presented in tables 1–3.

*Table 1: Thematic descriptions on representations of Europeanness in Pécs*

<b>Pécs (paper data)</b>	<b>Europeanness is represented through (n = 72)</b>	<b>Europeanness should be represented through (n = 36)</b>
European or foreign artists or performers	39 %	19 %
European or foreign arts or performances	21	19
European visitors	15	3
displaying different national cultures in Europe	13	19
EU sponsorship, EU symbols or other connections to EU	6	3
renovation of architecture and public spaces	6	6
diversity	4	3
cooperation with other ECOCs or foreign partners	4	6
foreign languages	4	3
ECOC title	3	-
stressing connections between Hungary and Europe	3	3
special quality and scale of the events	3	-
the city or the country as a part of Europe	1	6
advertisement or promotion in media	1	6



*Table 2: Thematic descriptions on representations of Europeanness in Tallinn*

<b>Tallinn</b>	<b>Europeanness is represented through (n = 247)</b>	<b>Europeanness should be represented through (n = 206)</b>
European or foreign artists or performers	14 %	12 %
European visitors	12	5
ECOC title	11	4
European or foreign arts or performances	11	11
atmosphere or common mentality	8	8
displaying different national cultures in Europe	7	9
city or country as part of Europe	6	11
EU sponsorship, EU symbols or other connections to EU	5	3
foreign languages	4	5
diversity	3	5
advertisement or promotion in media	3	6
stressing connections between Estonia and Europe	3	10
cooperation with other ECOCs or foreign partners	3	3
displaying of European culture or traditions	2	4
special quality and scale of the events	1	2

*Table 3: Thematic descriptions on representations of Europeanness in Turku*

<b>Turku</b>	<b>Europeanness is represented through (n = 303)</b>	<b>Europeanness should be represented through (n = 237)</b>
European or foreign artists or performers	35 %	18 %
European or foreign arts or performances	21	12
cooperation with other ECOCs or foreign partners	9	9
European visitors	9	4
diversity	7	4
foreign languages	5	1
the city or the country as a part of Europe	4	11
European events or festivals	4	1
atmosphere or common mentality	4	7
special quality and scale of the events	3	2
the ECOC title	3	2
displaying different national cultures in Europe	2	5

stressing connections between Finland and Europe	2	4
displaying of European culture or traditions	2	5

As the tables indicate, the respondents most often approached the representation of Europeanness in the ECOC events by emphasizing the involvement of European people in the events: European (or just ‘foreign’) artists and performers, European visitors, and, particularly in the case of Turku, European partners in diverse cultural and social cooperation projects. Besides the European or foreign artists and performers, the respondents emphasized European (or foreign) art and cultural performances as indicators of Europeanness in the events. For most of these respondents the contents or topics of the artistic projects or performances by the foreign artists were not crucial – the origin of the artists or the producers of the projects was more significant in perceiving an event as a representation of Europeanness. Thus, the perception of Europeanness was closely related to the distinction between ‘national’ and ‘non-national’: other nationalities represented Europe and Europeanness. Nationality – or rather the citizenship of another country – determined Europeanness in the events.

In general, many of the respondents connected Europeanness to the display of different national cultures in the ECOC events. This notion on Europeanness underlined the uniqueness and particularity of national cultures and identities – and Europeanness as being composed of different national cultures and their differences rather than having its basis on a common and shared transnational culture and identity. Rather than emphasizing the idea of the ‘Europe of regions’, the results of the study indicate that Europe is still largely understood and approached as the ‘Europe of nations’. In addition, Europeanness was quite often related to cultural diversity, multiculturalism, different languages, and other kinds of plurality in culture and society. In Pécs and Tallinn the diverse links to the EU – such as the EU sponsorship of the events and the regeneration projects and the presence of the EU flag in the events and promotional material – were also often considered as indications of Europeanness. In these cities, the idea of Europeanness was relatively often intertwined with the EU.

As in the case of other area-based identities, the views regarding the desired way to represent Europeanness in the events were more evenly spread than the views regarding their current representation. Still, the respondents mostly emphasized the European or foreign artists and performers and European artistic products and cultural performances as the way Europeanness should be represented in the events. In addition, the respondents often noted that simply bringing to the fore the fact that the ECOC and the host country are a part of Europe would function as an indication of Europeanness. In general, Europeanness was expected to be represented in the events as a rather ‘thin’ cultural identity – as an identity which is transmitted and represented through

contemporary international cultural agents and their interaction and presence in the designated city and realized through the geographical fact that the city and the country are part of Europe.

The respondents did generally not discuss Europeaness by highlighting common European history, heritage, monuments, or historical sites. Only in Pécs did some respondents mention the renovations of historical buildings and squares in the city center. Similarly, relatively few respondents discussed common European cultural traditions in their responses. Descriptions of Europeaness were notably non-historical. The lack of history in the descriptions of Europeaness can be interpreted in several ways: Europeaness was either perceived through contemporariness – as a spatial identity which has been formed only recently or which is getting its form through various relations in the present time. Or the history is commonly related to the identity formation at the national or local level – not at the European level (for a similar notion see, Mayer & Palmowski 2004). History and cultural traditions were more often brought to the fore in the responses related to locality, regionality, and national culture. Europeaness was considered rather as being manifested by European people and their interaction.

Some of the respondents in Turku and Tallinn and in the online data from Pécs recognized a particular European atmosphere or mentality in the ECOC events, and emphasized that the events should bring it to the fore. In all case cities, this atmosphere or mentality was described in the responses mostly in positive terms such as being tolerant, open-minded, modern, civilized, and united. In addition, some of the respondents related the Europeaness in the ECOC events to high quality, manifoldness, experimentality, and innovativeness. If the events were considered as lacking an expected quality, appealing to the idea of Europeaness could be used as a source of argument in the criticism towards the contents of the ECOC program.

Even though the respondents relatively often perceived Europeaness in the ECOC events and it was often considered as a concept that should be represented in the events, in their responses regarding Europeaness many of the respondents still wanted to emphasize the significance of locality and, particularly, national culture. In some responses locality and national culture were perceived as easily recognizable, clear, and coherent entities, while Europeaness was interpreted as being more plural and diverse and thus even blurred in a negative way. Introducing and representing more coherent, easily framed, and 'closer' cultural entities was perceived in these views as being more valuable and important. In these views the idea of the multilayeredness of identities did not reach the supranational level: locality, regionality, and national culture were often perceived as linked and their representations could be described as enmeshed, but the distinction between them and Europeaness remained clear – probably in part because the Europeaness as such was difficult to conceive of. In general, the responses indicate that the importance of

national culture as a source of cultural identification has not weakened despite of the strengthened discourses of a shared European culture and identity – a discourse that is promoted in the EU cultural policy and which is the core identity political focus of the ECOC initiative.

## 4 The Main Results of Study

The selection of the articles included in this compilation dissertation is based on the different points of view they open to the identity politics in the ECOC initiative. The articles document different phases of the research process and bring out the main findings of the project: how area-based identities and cultural diversity are explicitly and implicitly defined in policy and promotional rhetoric; how identity politics is reflected in urban regeneration; and how representations of identities are interpreted at local level and constructed and used in grass root level cultural activism. In this section the core results of the selected articles are summarized and discussed further in the broader theoretical frame of the research project and the recent academic literature.

The main focus of the article *'Rhetoric of unity and cultural diversity in the making of European cultural identity'* is in the EU cultural policy and its rhetoric through which the idea of Europeanness is intentionally or unintentionally determined. The analysis of the policy rhetoric brought to the fore three discursive modes of giving meanings to European cultural identity: the rhetoric emphasizes either 'cultural unity' or 'cultural diversity' as the basis for a European identity. However, these opposite discursive modes were usually combined. The controversial and partly paradoxical discourse of 'unity and diversity' uses the points of view and arguments of the other two discourses depending on the discursive situation. The discourse of unity and diversity is profoundly flexible and as such a useful rhetorical tool in the EU's identity politics. Its fundamental aim, however, is in promoting the cultural unity and social cohesion in the EU. The discourse characterizes the current EU policy rhetoric as the EU's official slogan 'united in diversity' indicates. During the past 20 years, several academic studies and essayistic anthologies (e.g., Paling & Veldheer 1998; Delanty & Rumford 2005; Hellström 2006; Sassatelli 2002; 2009) have approached European cultural identity by discussing the ideas of unity and diversity as the discursive points of view in its production.

In the rhetoric of the EU cultural policy and of the local ECOC promotional materials, European cultural identity and its 'unitedness in diversity' is intertwined with the ideas and practices of fostering European cultural heritage. On one hand, European cultural heritage is discussed in the policy and promotional texts in terms of diversity by emphasizing the multifacetedness of the heritage and manifold historical narratives in Europe. On the other hand, the cultural heritage is not only seen as bearing the legacy of separate European nations and ethnic or regional groups, but manifesting the common memory and heritage of all Europeans. Fostering the diversity (and paradoxically

commonness at the same time) of European culture(s) is expected to produce a dialogue and understanding between Europeans, increase the cultural participation, and eventually create a feeling of belonging to a common 'European culture'. In general, the emphasis on cultural heritage as the basis of Europeanness relies on thick understanding of European cultural identity.

The ECOC initiative can be interpreted as one of the EU's attempts to produce and strengthen the idea of a transnational European culture and heritage. The idea of a transnational cultural heritage has recently been much discussed in the academia. In these discussions, scholars have had contradicting views on whether a transnational European heritage can eventually exist and if yes, what might be its common ground (see e.g., Ashworth & Larkham 1994). Critical scholars have asked, for example, what is the European dimension that goes beyond a mere sum of national icons, which still, in fact, promotes the nation (Sassatelli 2006, 29) or questioned the possibility of a common European commemoration and heritage practices due to the lack of a coherent 'European people' – the main difference between Europe and its nations, as Gerard Delanty (2009, 37) notes. As several scholars have pointed out, the EU's attempts for cultural Europeanization and identity-building through culture have not supplanted national or state identities, but even mobilized domestic resistance and opposition (Checkel & Katzenstein 2009; Jones & Subotic 2011, 542).

However, scholars have found a possible common ground for European identity and a transnational heritage in urbanity (Sassatelli 2009), European cities and their historical environment (Ashworth & Graham 1997), and the architectural styles and movements in Europe (Delanty & Jones 2002). This kind of historical and urban focus is utilized by the EU in several of its cultural initiatives such as the ECOC, the European Heritage Label (EHL), and the European Heritage Days (see the policy analysis of the EU's heritage initiatives: Lähdesmäki forthcoming c). In addition to historical urbanity, the EU aims to constitute common transnational heritage through 'the idea of European unity' and 'the unity of European ideas', following the conceptualization by Gregory J. Ashworth and Brian Graham (1997, 383–384). The heritage based on 'the idea of European unity' is fostered in the EU rhetoric by referring to the narratives of building the union, its institutions, principles, and values, while the heritage of 'the unity of the European ideas' comprises ideas, values, and activities that are perceived as continental rather than 'only' national (see Lähdesmäki forthcoming c).

The ECOC initiative functions as one of the EU's ideological devices for the creation and implementation of European-wide identity politics. In general, the cultural initiatives are the EU's technologies of power, in a Foucauldian (1991) sense, aiming to legitimate and justify certain political ideas and ideologies. Their identity political focus is in aiming a) to produce shared interpretations of European cultural heritage as part of people's values, beliefs, and understanding

of their identity; and b) to create a feeling of belonging among the Europeans and identification with Europe and the EU.

As a political tool, the ECOC initiative obeys one of the EU's fundamental principles of governance: mingling the top-down and bottom-up dynamics between the EU and local agents (Sassatelli 2006, 30; Sassatelli 2009, 68). The agents at the local level are made to implement the imposed cultural scheme and obey the criteria and rules of the initiative. The cities are expected to compete for the ECOC designation, invest in the implementation of the ECOC program, narrate their culture as European in the promotion of the program, and produce common European identity on their own initiative. This form of governance is also used in other EU actions and programs, such as the EHL (Lähdesmäki 2014a; forthcoming c). Through this kind of principle of governance the local agents are attached to the building of common European identity and the EU as a cultural project. This is at the same time the ideological core of the EU's identity politics: to produce self-creating and self-maintaining communality, coherency, and cultural integration in the EU.

The ideological and political agenda of the ECOC initiative is not only 'utilized' at the EU level: it is also taken advantage of at local, regional, and national levels in order to raise the international awareness and publicity of the designated cities, attract domestic and international tourists, and promote the possibilities for European and national funding for example for local regeneration projects. In general, the ECOC initiative functions at the local, regional, and national levels as an instrument in the 'politics of the European significance'. Even though the initiative includes certain frames in which the local, regional, and national agents have to represent the local culture as European, the vague rhetoric of the initiative enables the agents to interpret the idea of Europe and Europeaness in their own way – and thus use the power over defining the European cultural identity. This power has been used e.g., in the promotional materials of the ECOCs in the former socialist countries in which the history, heritage, memory, and experiences of the socialist past have been included in the understanding of Europe and Europeaness.

Even though the economic goals of the EU's cultural initiatives are rhetorically introduced only as 'secondary' compared to cultural and social ones, the economic points of departure are generally the underlying principles of the EU policies. The analysis of the EU policy rhetoric indicates that economic values determine the EU's cultural agenda. The ECOC initiative is closely intertwined with the sphere of economics e.g., with its emphasis on tourism, place promotion, and the fostering of creative industries. In general, the EU seeks to promote culture as a catalyst for creativity because of the expected economic growth produced by the cultural and creative industries. Cultural and creative sectors are believed to foster innovation also in other sectors of the economy.

The ECOC initiative is economically a cheap investment for the EU (see e.g., Lähdesmäki 2010). The implementation of the ECOC year is mainly financed by local, regional, and national sources. The EU's economic support for organizing the ECOC events is relatively small in regard to the interest and competition the ECOC brand generates in the cities. Between 2000 and 2006, the sum earmarked for each ECOC was 500.000 euros. According to the Palmer report (2004a, 181), the total amount of the EU support for an ECOC represented in average only 1.19 % of the total funding generated for ECOCs in 1995–2004. The average total operation expenditures of the twenty ECOCs between 1995 and 2004 were 37.66 million euros (according to the budgets exposed by the Palmer report 2004b). Even though, in the Culture Program launched in 2007, the amount of financial support for each ECOC was increased to 1.5 million euros (and named as the Melina Mercouri prize after the Greek minister of culture who initiated the designation), the EU funding still comprises only a small fraction of the total budgets of the ECOCs. In Pécs, the expected total operating expenditure of the ECOC program was 36 million euros, in Turku 55 million euros, and in Tallinn 37 million euros. The general financial crisis in Europe however reduced the total expenditures in Pécs to 35 million euros (Rampton et al. 2011, 52) and in Tallinn to only 14 million euros (Rampton et al. 2012, 20). In addition, 140 million euros in Pécs, 145 million euros in Turku, and 195 million euros in Tallinn were allocated to capital investments in various infrastructural projects (Rampton et al. 2011, 52; Rampton et al. 2012, 33; Helander et. al. 2006, 105). These projects were mainly financed by the EU's structural funds in addition to the national, regional, and local capital. However, all the planned infrastructural projects were not implemented or the plans have been revised.

The analysis of the EU policy rhetoric and local promotional rhetoric in the ECOCs indicates that Europe and the EU as concepts, ideas, and realities are often intentionally or unintentionally paralleled. However, Europe and European institutions or Europeanization and the European integration are not coterminous, as Sassatelli (2006, 19) emphasizes. In addition, the EU and the European institutions do not form a single agent in the political sphere or an unanimous author of the European narrative and identity (see Sassatelli 2006, 20). Generalizing the EU as a singular and monophonic agent does not only characterize the policy and promotional rhetoric of the ECOC initiative, but also many academic studies.

The article *'European Capitals of Culture as Cultural Meeting Places – Strategies of Representing Cultural Diversity'* discusses the discursive meaning-making of the idea of cultural diversity in the promotional materials of the three case ECOCs. The concept of cultural diversity can be understood as a hypernym – a word that combines several ways of discussing, defining, and representing its focus. These discussions, definitions, and representations have been conceptualized for example with the concepts of multiculturalism, interculturalism, cross-culturalism, transculturalism, cultural dialogue, cultural pluralism, and cultural



mosaic. The definitions of these concepts criss-cross in academic, political, and everyday discussions. Particularly in a non-academic context, the different concepts have often been used as synonyms, or the contents of the different concepts are difficult to distinguish from one another. Of these concepts, multiculturalism was used most often in the local promotional materials of the case ECOCs. In the promotional material, the concept was used in discussing different kinds of culturally and socially plural situations, cultural expressions, and attitudes, practices, and policies related to them.

Ulrike Hanna Meinhof and Anna Triandafyllidou (2006, 13) state that cities as focused urban environments offer better cognitive tools than nations or states for re-imagining the new interdependencies and flows of contemporary societies. According to them, the contemporary urban realities in European cities provide a landscape for intercultural encounters and flows of immigrants to develop new forms of cultural expression that transcend the boundaries of the 'national' and of the 'ethnic' and create new types of artistic expression, new cultural and commercial networks for art products, and eventually new realities of cultural diversity and cosmopolitanism (Meinhof and Triandafyllidou 2006, 15). In the contemporary cultural discussions, the culturally diverse and intercultural urban ethos is usually approached in a positive sense and as a fruitful point of departure for an innovative and dynamic cultural production.

The idea of a culturally diverse, interculturally rich, and cosmopolitan urban ethos was promoted (and produced) in the promotional materials of the case ECOCs. The analysis of the promotional material from Pécs, Tallinn, and Turku indicates how the discourse of cultural diversity was produced using several different discursive strategies. All of the cities stressed their location as a historical meeting place of different ethnicities and nationalities. In addition, the cities emphasized their architecture as an expression of the multicultural layers of the cities. In the promotional material the canon of Western art history was often referred to as the basis for common Europeanness compounded of various nationalities and regionalities. Besides historical references, in the promotional materials cultural diversity was related to the global imagery of popular culture, street culture, and contemporary art. One essential strategy was to represent different minorities and their visual culture as signs of cultural diversity. The results of the analysis reveal how the idea of cultural diversity is related to the idea of Europeanness. On one hand, cultural diversity was discussed and defined in the data in relation to the contemporary global or international cultural and artistic phenomena that surpass the national, ethnic, or European cultural contents. On the other hand, cultural diversity was approached by emphasizing the presence of different national cultural features of European nations. These features were considered as materializing in the cities e.g., in the historical and architectural heritage. In both cases the rhetoric in the promotional material relied on the ideas of unity and communality among

Europeans based on the recognition and familiarization of the diversity in Europe. Thus, the materials reflected the discourse of 'unity and diversity'.

Even though the discourse of cultural diversity aimed to bring to the fore and celebrate the difference in the cultural scene of the case cities, the strategies of the discourse obeyed the 'politics of selection': only a certain kind of cultural diversity was promoted in the discourse. The discourse avoided bringing to the fore the cultural, social, or political contradictions related to the multicultural realities of the cities. Historical or present day conflicts between different ethnic, national, religious, linguistic, or cultural groups were ignored in the rhetoric of the data. This kind of discourse of cultural diversity has also characterized the promotional material of other ECOCs (see e.g., Habit 2013, 138). In general, the discourse of cultural diversity found in the promotional materials is characterized by an agenda called 'happy multiculturalism' in critical studies. It refers to a discourse of cultural diversity from which unwanted unhappy subjects have been erased (Fortier 2005, 567). During the recent years, this kind of approach to cultural diversity has been criticized for ignoring the complex cultural and social relations and realities of contemporary 'superdiverse' societies (see e.g., Leeuw & van Wichelen, 2011).

It seems that power hierarchies and political tensions are tied to the concept of cultural diversity even though it is often introduced as an equal and anti-racist discourse. A central feature of the discourse of cultural diversity is its tendency to obscure its power mechanisms. Supporting and celebrating cultural diversity and cultural heterogeneity of the community may aim to eliminate inequality, but dominance and subordination may still be founded on the structures of the discourse itself. Approaching the difference from a cultural perspective may hide the social, societal, and economic inequality between different groups in the society. As Anne Cronin (2002) has noted, the culturalization of difference may actually work, beside its best intentions, as a naturalization of inequalities. In the discourse of cultural diversity, culture is often offered as a tool for tackling various contemporary societal problems such as intolerance and prejudice towards difference. Culture is considered to have the potential to positively influence and improve various complex social and societal issues. I argue that the potential of culture as such to tackle the complex social and societal problems is however very limited.

The article '*Discourses of Europeaness in the reception of the European Capital of Culture events: The case of Pécs 2010*' focuses on the discursive meaning-making of Europeaness in one of the case cities. The article brings to the fore the reception of the ECOC events at the grass roots level in a local setting and illustrates the notions and understanding of Europeaness in the ECOC events by offering plenty of quotations of the responses in the questionnaire data. The article's main focus is in the discursive formation of Europeaness as a socio-spatial experience. Found discourses are discussed from the points of view of human geography and the sociology of space by stressing how transnational and global

spatial categories, such as Europe, and their area-based identities, such as Europeaness, are constantly constituted in local settings through multiple and interactive physical, social, and cultural processes (see e.g., Massey 2005; 2007, 10–16). The theoretical point of departure of the article is in one of the classics in the field of the sociology of space: Henry Lefebvre's study on spatiality. In Lefebvre's thinking the sensory space is intertwined with linguistic and symbolic conceptualizations and subjective experiences, beliefs and uses of space, which all are present in a multi-layered way in our physical environment. Lefebvre (1991, 38–41) has discussed these different aspects of space as perceived (*le perçu*), conceived (*le conçu*), and lived (*le vécu*). Lefebvre's theory is applied in the analysis as a starting point to illustrate the multi-layered nature of the discourses of Europeaness. The analysis indicates how Europeaness is experienced, verbalized and given meanings by using these three different conceptual levels. The ECOC program itself forms a conceived space of Europeaness that directs the interpretations of Europeaness among the ECOC audiences.

The analysis indicated that conceived and lived spaces dominated the formation of discourses on Europeaness among the respondents in Pécs; it was less interpreted through concrete environment and materialized places (i.e. perceived space). In the data, only a few respondents discussed Europeaness through common European heritage, monuments, or historical sites. The results thus reveal a contradiction between the notions on Europeaness in the audience reception and the local promotional and the EU policy rhetoric. As the article '*Rhetoric of unity and cultural diversity in the making of European cultural identity*' brought to the fore, the EU policy rhetoric emphasizes a common (tangible) heritage as a basis for a common European cultural identity. Similarly the local promotional rhetoric, particularly in the post-socialist host countries, has emphasized the physical urban environment as the location through which Europeaness can be manifested, as the article '*European Capital of Culture Designation as an Initiator of Urban Transformation in the Post-socialist Countries*' suggests.

As mentioned, the EU decision made in 2005 took the ECOC initiative into a new phase. Since 2009, the EU has designated two host cities for each year: one from the so-called old member states and one from the so-called new member states. Including the former socialist countries in Central and Eastern Europe into the EU's cultural initiatives has been important for both the EU and the member states that joined the EU in the Eastern enlargement. For the EU, the ECOC initiative functions as a tool for increasing the cultural integration in Europe and advancing the urban regeneration in the Eastern part of the union. For the host countries in the Eastern part of the union, the ECOC title is, or at least aspires to be, a mobilizing metaphor for cementing a new status or bringing about a desired one, as Sassatelli (2009, 61–62) has noted.

The article *'European Capital of Culture Designation as an Initiator of Urban Transformation in the Post-socialist Countries'* explores how the ECOC initiative influenced (or is meant to influence) the urban regeneration and transformation of the city space in several recent and recently designated ECOCs in the 'new' Central and Eastern European EU member states. The focus of the article is on the discursive connectedness of the idea of Europeaness and urban transformation – which has been narrated in the promotional materials of the designated cities as 'reaching the European level', 'absorbing European values', or 'returning back to the European cultural sphere'.

Although the integration of the EU has increased in various sectors during the recent decades, the old division of Europe into 'East' and 'West' has not disappeared after the fall of communism, but continues to influence the notions of Europeaness at various levels (Crudu 2011). The Central and Eastern European countries, which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, are not always perceived to be as European as their Western counterparts (Lee & Bideleux 2009). Many Central and Eastern European countries therefore share the interest of 'becoming' European or being taken as serious members of the EU. The ECOC designation functions as a possibility to 'become' a meaningful European city on a wider European and global scale. However, 'becoming European' produces challenges for many smaller Central and Eastern European cities when 'being European' is perceived by stressing the condition of infrastructure and modern appearance of the city space, as is often done. This kind of understanding of 'how a European city looks' was often used in the ECOCs as a rhetorical argument to justify the renovations and reparations of the city space. Thus the designation functioned as a 'Europe brand' for the cities in the Eastern part of the union.

Even though the ECOC designation aims to decrease the division between 'East' and 'West', the idea of a split Europe continues to characterize the promotional texts produced in the ECOCs in the Eastern part of the union. The idea of 'East' and 'West' remains and is both intentionally and unintentionally emphasized in the texts. On one hand, the ECOCs in the Eastern part of the union have aimed to 'become' like their Western counterparts. On the other hand, the ECOCs have aimed to broaden the notion on Europe and European cultural identity by narrating the socialist history, heritage, and experience as a part of Europeaness. All the investigated ECOCs in the former socialist countries openly brought to the fore their past under the totalitarian regimes. Even though the political split between 'East' and 'West' may have disappeared in Europe, the split is still often discussed in economic and cultural terms. In general, the concepts of 'East', 'West', and 'Central' get notably different definitions in different European countries.

The ECOC designation has had diverse influences on the investigated cities: it has changed the city space and the citizens' everyday life in various ways. Together the investments in the cultural infrastructure, improvements of the

buildings and public spaces in the city, and implementing various urban design projects that reflect the current international trends in urban development have recreated the (inner) cities with a modern atmosphere and groomed look. On one hand, politicians, urban planners, cultural agents, and citizens in the ECOCs have related these changes to 'Europeanness'. According to these views, 'European' is paralleled to modernization, welfare, and the quality of the urban space. On the other hand, the ECOC initiative has been criticized for unifying the cities in Europe by expecting them to produce culture with similar values and reconstruct the urban environment with similar ideals. Thus, the ECOC initiative can be considered as a policy tool, which eventually narrows the cultural richness of Europe by ignoring the already existing local and grass roots level cultural phenomena and by expecting development that follows the current trends in urban regeneration, planning, and design. Even though the EU's aim for the designation is to bring to the fore the diversity of local and regional cultures in Europe, it simultaneously homogenizes the cultural offerings in Europe due to the structure of the initiative which expects the cities to follow the top-down imposed criteria, reflect the current regeneration and development values and trends, and compete against other cities for the designation.

The implementation of the ECOC designation has often included tensions and confrontations in the cities, as was discussed earlier. In some cases the designation has even caused counter-movements objecting the designation itself, its official implementation, the political maneuvering of the ECOC program, or the financing of it. In Turku, part of the criticism towards the ECOC designation was organized under a project titled Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011. The project produced a channel for alternative and un-canonized culture to promote its position in the city. The last article of the study, titled '*Cultural activism as a counter-discourse to the European Capital of Culture program: the case of Turku2011*' focuses on an un-canonized grass roots level cultural activism and its networked and culture-oriented strategies of protest against the ECOC program. The focus of the article is in a special case study in which the discursive dynamics of a local counter-movement toward the ECOC initiative are analyzed. The ECOC designation often produces micro-level activities, which are rarely noticed in academic research. These micro-level activities bring to the fore the concrete impacts of the ECOC initiative on the local citizens. The micro-level activities and movements manifest the diversity of meanings and uses of the city and their analysis reveals the existence of power relations and hierarchical positions not only between but also among the decision-makers, cultural operators, and citizens of the ECOCs.

The article discusses how the new activist stratum in the Western world is intertwined with the cultural production: for it, culture functions both as the medium and the message of resistance. The contemporary activist protests often produce cultural products or representations which are disseminated in

common gatherings, within public space, and online. The study indicates how culture has several functions in the activist projects: it provides a means to express shared and individual values, views, and sentiments, to spread ideological and political ideas and information, to raise public attention, to create communality, feeling of belonging, and identities, to re-socialize new (and old) members to the community, and to communicate and negotiate the ideological and political differences with the official power and the status quo. The spread of the Internet and the development of social media have had a major influence on the recent organization of social movements and the intensification of activism. As the Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011 project indicates, social media offers both an easy platform for networking, communication, and organization, and a virtual space in which the activism itself may take place.

The activists in the Capital of Subculture project criticized the official program of Turku2011 for festivalization and commercialization of culture and the negligence towards the local, spontaneous, and self-generated small-scale cultural production in the city. However, from the point of view of the official program, the cultural content of the Capital of Subculture project manifested the idea of allowing local people to participate in the creation of culture – a goal which is emphasized in the EU's policy texts for the ECOC and the application book and the promotional rhetoric of Turku2011. The critical discussions on the planning and implementation of the ECOC year, at its best, brings to the fore the various problems in different local domains and allows the citizens to participate in a public dialogue in solving the recognized problems. Even though the number of active participants in the Capital of Subculture project remained rather small, the project succeeded in bringing to the fore alternative views on cultural production and the 'ownership' of the public space in Turku. It, however, failed to bring about further discussions or dialogue between the different cultural domains and agents in the city.

# *5 The Future of the Identity Politics in the EU Cultural Policy*

The EU's interest in promoting and fostering the common European cultural identity does not seem to be diminishing – quite the opposite. Various recently launched EU initiatives aim to produce a thick version of Europeanness by emphasizing culture, history, and heritage as the common basis for a European identity. During the past two decades, the EU has launched or jointly administered several initiatives, such as the Raphael community action program (1996–2000), the European Heritage Days (in cooperation with the Council of Europe since 1999), and the European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage (since 2002), which particularly focus on fostering the common cultural heritage in Europe. The European Heritage Label (launched as an intergovernmental initiative in 2006 and turned into an EU action in the beginning of 2013) is the most recent EU's cultural initiative in this domain. In the preparatory state of the European Heritage Label, the ECOC initiative was taken as a model and an example of good practice, and a similar mode of cultural governance is therefore used in the both initiatives (EC 2010). In the light of these initiatives, the building of a European cultural identity in the EU cultural policy will continue to rely on the ideas of urbanity and cultural heritage also in the future.

In the past, there has been a noticeable bias in favor of Western and Southern Europe compared to Northern and Eastern Europe in writing the history of 'Europe', claims Maria Mälksoo (2009, 673). The EU's eastern enlargements in 2004 and 2007 have forced the EU to face new memory regimes that "are forcefully entering the 'discourse competition' on the European stage" (Onken 2007, 30). The attempts of the Eastern and Central European countries to bring their mnemonic culture into the common European historical consciousness challenge the long-term tendency of the western core of the EU to act as a model for the whole of Europe (Mälksoo 2009, 673). Culture and cultural and historical interpretations have become one of the crucial arenas of political struggle in the attempts to become European and narrate the belonging to (the idea of) Europe (Lähdesmäki 2014a; forthcoming c).

As this study has indicated, the Eastern European countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 have been interested in broadening the (Western European)

interpretation and narrative of the European history and cultural characteristics. The cultural initiatives, such as the ECOC, have functioned as useful instruments to introduce the 'West' with Eastern European historical realities, cultural particularities, arts, national heroes, and cities and to raise their significance on the European scale. In general, the Eastern European EU member states have actively shown interest in sharing the cultural and symbolical layers of Europe and the EU. For example, all member states (except Estonia) that joined the union in 2004 and 2007 have participated in the EHL scheme already during its intergovernmental phase. Another example of this interest is the official will to recognize the EU symbols. The version of the European Constitution Treaty, which was rejected through referendum in 2005 by the French and Dutch voters, included a list of the official symbols of the EU: the flag, the anthem, the motto, the currency, and the Europe Day. The list was cut down from the Treaty of Lisbon. However, the symbols are mentioned in the Treaty in the separate section of the declarations of the member states (Treaty of Lisbon 2008, declaration 52). Besides eight 'old' member states, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Romania, Slovenia, and the Slovak Republic, who joined the EU in 2004 and 2007, have agreed to declare that they recognize these symbols as expressions of the sense of community.

The current euro-crisis and the economic recession in the EU member states may influence the EU cultural policy by diminishing its significance in the EU governance. Still, the economic crisis and the dissatisfaction and mistrust towards the EU that has increased in the member states due to the crises may cause pressure for the EU to strengthen its attempts of creating a more unified and coherent union. The cultural initiatives are easy and relatively cheap instruments for it. In addition, the economic crisis in the EU may emphasize the role of the economy in approaches to culture. As mentioned, culture is already at the moment subordinated by the economic discourse and aims in the EU policy rhetoric. The role of economics will likely continue or even increase in the EU cultural policy in the future.

As discussed earlier, the EU's cultural initiatives reflect the economic interests in creative and cultural industries and cultural regeneration – the interests that recur in the current discourses of cultural policy, cultural management, urban planning, and place marketing. In the implementation of the EU's cultural initiatives, such as the ECOC, the city image, and local, regional, national, and European cultural identities are aimed to be commercialized and commodified for consumption. The economical aims of the EU's cultural initiatives can be generally linked to the ethos of the so-called 'recreational turn', which is characterized by investing in creative industries, transformations of industrial agglomerations into cultural spaces, urbanization of tourist resorts, and the phenomena conceptualized as 'touristification', 'heritageing', 'festivalization' (Stock 2006), and 'eventification' (Jakob 2013). The concepts of 'touristification' and 'heritageing' refer to the processes in which



local, regional and national traditions, celebration dates, and other cultural activities are transformed into touristic goods and heritage products that are marketed to both the local residents and tourists. 'Festivalization' and 'eventification' as concepts are related to the 'touristification' and 'heritageing': they refer to a symbolic transformation of the local activities and public space into a particular form of cultural consumption (van Elderen 1997, 126). At the end of the 20th century, 'festivalization' and 'eventification' of culture has caused an explosion in the number of festivals and events thus increasing the use of culture as a means of stimulating economic development, investments, and urban regeneration (Richards 2000; Prentice & Andersen, 2003; Quinn 2005; Fjell 2007). The development of the EU cultural policy and the establishment of the EU's cultural initiatives can be interpreted in the context of these cultural-economic turns and socio-cultural trajectories.

Various studies have demonstrated that cultural events and festivals can help strengthen local identity and civic pride and promote integration and social cohesion, especially when local people were given the 'ownership' of the event (Derrett 2003; Crespi-Vallbona & Richards 2007). On one hand, the festivals are good opportunities to manifest local cultures and foster local identities. On the other hand, they are also excellent examples of selling the globalized culture. In fact, the 'cultural' content of cultural festivals may be crucially limited, and the successful and renowned events have been criticized for replacing the traditional culture of local communities by a globalized 'popular' culture (Crespi-Vallbona & Richards 2007, 103). Similar trajectories have been noticed in the implementation of the ECOC initiative. Even though the initiative aims to foster local, regional, and European cultures, scholars have noted how the designated cities have stressed various mega-events, global cultural products, and international popular culture phenomena during their ECOC year (e.g., Sassatelli 2002, 444; García 2004b, 114). What will be the role of area-based cultural identities and local, regional, and national cultural particularities in the future ECOC programs? Will the ECOC designation turn into a 'glocal' cultural mega-event in which the 'local', 'regional', and 'national' are promoted and commodified for supranational European and global cultural markets? One might think that this kind of development has already taken place in the implementation of the cultural programs in the ECOCs.

The discourses of cultural and creative industries have been embedded in the discourse of economy through the concepts of 'cultural economy' and 'creative economy'. Besides cultural and creative economy, the current policy, management, and marketing talk reflect the ideas conceptualized as 'experience economy' (Lähdesmäki 2013a). Some scholars have described these ideas as an 'economy of fascination' in order to emphasize how the cities have been themed to market competitively and desirably their unique 'experience world' (Schmid 2009). During the past three decades, politicians, urban managers, and marketing experts have increasingly focused on the development of experiences

in the urban space in order to foster the consumption (Jakob 2013). As a consequence, cities have started to seek possibilities to offer people spectacular urban environments by making spaces for the moments of extraordinary experiences in order to profit from people's interests to gain new experiences (d'Hauterres 2013). The experience-based urban development has moved from investing in 'hard' location factors, such as roads and major buildings, towards 'soft' location factors, such as recreational and cultural activities and place-based particularities. Aestheticization of urban space is at the same time one of the means and outcomes of the experience-based development ideas. On one hand, aestheticization is a process that aims to create novelty, surprise, and excitement, but on the other hand, it may only result in superficial changes (d'Hauterres 2013).

Many of the ECOCs have aimed to boost tourism in the city by offering the visitors diverse recreational and cultural activities and spectacular urban places. As Daniel Habit (2013, 132) states, the urban space in the ECOCs have been turned into 'citytainment'. He even compares the implementation of the ECOC year of Sibiu in Romania to the process described as disneyfication (Habit 2013, 134). David Harvey (1989) has used the concept of disneyfication to describe the attempts to transform the urban environment into safe and clean spaces of entertainment, which promote the city and attract capital, tourists, and people who share the same values. The logic of Disneyland has globally influenced various initiatives and attempts to organize leisure activities and build environments for them (Hannigan 1998). Aestheticization and 'citytainment' are possible trajectories of the ECOC initiative and the EU's cultural and urban programs in general if the emphasis on economic values determines the future initiatives even more powerfully than they already do.

Besides economic interests, one of the fundamental aims of the EU cultural policy is to increase the interaction, dialogue and mutual understanding between people with different backgrounds. These aims are closely intertwined with economic interests: a means to bring people together and get them to interact with each other is a way to make them consume cultural products together. These attempts are likely to strengthen in the EU cultural policy. The economic and interactive aims are also intertwined in the current ideas of urban regeneration. Promoting the communication between citizens in the urban space and strengthening communality and urban identities in the city are crucial elements of today's urban regeneration policies.

The recent trends in urban regeneration emphasize, in particular, the role of local communities in the planning and implementation of regeneration projects. As a consequence, community regeneration has become an integral part of urban regeneration. Today, the success of urban regeneration projects is not only measured in physical transformation of the city space or its economic impact but also in its outcomes in creating vibrant communities, interaction between the citizens, feeling of comfort in the urban space, active participation in cultural

and social issues, and interests in the urban environment. However, the attempts to make the cities more 'livable' and increase the communality and dialogue in the urban space often originate from a top-down decision-making and urban planning practices – of which the ECOC initiative functions as an example. Scholars have criticized these attempts for their limited capacity to produce social inclusion and intercultural dialogue and for forgetting to involve local citizens in the planning and implementation of the urban development and regeneration processes (Hall 2004, 71; García 2004a; 2004b; Evans 2005). Could the future ECOC initiative be more flexible and open to development attempts and interests initiated by local citizens? Could the grass roots and bottom-up initiatives be more effectively involved in the planning and implementation of the ECOC year and the diverse regeneration and urban planning projects included in the ECOC program?

In this study the investigation has focused on the ECOC initiative and its local-level implementations which obey the decisions of the European Council and the Parliament ratified in 1999 and in 2006. The decision ratified in 2006 covers the selection of the ECOCs till the year 2019. In 2010, the European Commission started to prepare the continuation of the decision for the period between 2020 and 2033. The commission organized an online consultation and a public meeting in Brussels for various stakeholders of the initiative in order to improve it and strengthen its sustainability and long-term impacts. On the basis of the consultation and the results of diverse evaluations of the initiative and its implementation, the Council's and the Parliament's proposal for the new ECOC designation suggested retaining the main features and general structure of the initiative. In the proposal, the European dimension was still articulated as the core identity political focus of the initiative. In fact, the European dimension was brought to the fore in the proposal as one of the main problems faced by cities in their preparation for the ECOC title. According to the proposal, "the European dimension was not well understood and could have been more visible" in the past ECOCs (EC 2012a, 3).

Besides maintaining the European focus, the proposal for the continuation of the initiative aimed to renew its implementation by emphasizing the professional organization and management of the ECOC year. The criteria for the assessment of the ECOC applications were divided in the proposal into six new categories titled: "long-term strategy", "capacity to deliver", "cultural and artistic content", "European dimension", "outreach", and "management" (EC 2012a, 11). The proposal aimed to engage more closely with local population, including youth, diverse minority groups, and inhabitants from different social layers in the city, in the implementation of the initiative. These kinds of attempts serve the EU policy aims of strengthening the 'European dimension' and the production of a common European cultural sphere and identity through involving the citizens to cultural events that aim to bring to the fore the 'European culture' (Tzali 2007; Lähdesmäki 2012).

In addition to identity political attempts, the European Council's and the Parliament's proposal for the continuation of the ECOC initiative reflects tightened connections between cultural policy, economics, and branding. The brand value of the ECOC was recognized in several policy documents in the preparation of the new decision. The designation of "weak" ECOCs, i.e. cities which do not have enough capacity to implement the initiative according to the set criteria, were perceived as a "risk of damaging the prestige and the 'brand' that were developed for the ECoC over the years" (EC 2012a, 3). The ECOC initiative is a brand and its brand value for the EU is based on its visibility and positive impressions at the local level. The ECOC and its brand value are instruments which enable the presence of the EU and the European Commission at the cities. This presence is also related to the production of the 'European dimension' as the following critical notion from the Commission Staff Working Document indicates:

The question of the visibility of the EU is directly linked to the weak European dimension. In many ECoC such as Liverpool 2008 or Turku 2011 for example, there were very few references to the fact that the ECoC are an initiative of the EU in the communication material. Other cities such as Tallinn 2011 stopped using the logo of the Commission as soon as the Melina Mercouri prize had been paid (3 months before the beginning year of the title). (EC 2012b, 13.)

The creation of a shared and coherent European identity is the core identity political goal of the EU cultural policy. A coherent European identity would benefit another important EU's cultural political goal: the creation of common cultural markets in Europe. The current lack of common cultural markets – due to Europe's fragmentation along the national and linguistic lines – is often considered as a problem by the EU, as the following quotation from the proposal for establishing the Creative Europe Programme illustrates:

The European cultural and creative sectors are inherently fragmented along national and linguistic lines. On the one hand, fragmentation results in a culturally diverse and highly independent cultural landscape, providing a voice for the different cultural traditions forming the diversity of our European heritage. On the other hand, fragmentation leads to limited and sub-optimal transnational circulation of cultural and creative works and operators within and outside the Union, to geographical imbalances and - subsequently - to a limited choice for the consumer. (EC 2011b, 4).

The European-wide cultural initiatives aim to produce cultural commodities for the common cultural markets in the EU. However, Europe's fragmentation into national or ethno-linguistic units seems to be difficult to overcome. The same fragmentation challenges the European identity project: national or ethno-

linguistic units are still the core determinants of the identification processes in Europe.

In addition to the ongoing economic crisis, the EU is also facing other challenges that may influence its cultural and identity politics. The increasing EU-criticism and nationalist movements in the member states have questioned or objected to the EU's integration policies and the existence of a European communality based on a common transnational identity. In addition, the diversification of the European societies and the migration outside the continent challenges the European identity project – What can be considered as the common ground for a shared identity in today's 'superdiverse' reality in Europe? Does the production of a common European identity include a risk for creating new distinctions and divisions between 'us' and 'them'? Should the EU's identity politics be based on 'thin' rather than 'thick' perception of a European identity?

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# *Article I*

## **RHETORIC OF UNITY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE MAKING OF EUROPEAN CULTURAL IDENTITY**

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# **Rhetoric of unity and cultural diversity in the making of European cultural identity**

Tuuli Lähdesmäki

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The fundamental aim in the cultural policy of the EU is to emphasize the obvious cultural diversity of Europe, while looking for some underlying common elements which unify the various cultures in Europe. Through these common elements, the EU policy produces 'an imagined cultural community' of Europe, which is 'united in diversity' as one of the slogans of the union states. This discourse characterizes various documents which are essential in the European cultural policy, such as the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Agenda for Culture and the EU's decision on the European Capital of Culture program. In addition, the discourse is applied to the production of cultural events in European Capitals of Culture in practice. On all levels of the EU's cultural policy, the rhetoric of European cultural identity and its 'unitedness in diversity' is related with the ideas and practices of fostering common cultural heritage.

Keywords: cultural identity; the European Union; heritage.

## **European cultural identity in the making**

One of the main aims of the European Union has been to strengthen the unification of its member states in the areas of economics, trade and labor market. However, similar aims can also be found from the rhetoric of the EU's cultural policy. The fundamental aim in the cultural policy of the EU is to stress the obvious cultural diversity of Europe and at the same time find some underlying common elements which unify the diverse

cultures of Europe. Through these common elements the EU policy produces an imagined cultural community of Europe (Sassatelli 2002, p. 436), which is 'united in diversity' as one of the slogans of the union states.

The aim of this article is to analyze the production of European cultural identity in the EU's cultural policy. In addition, the article explores how the rhetoric of the policy is put to practice in the production of cultural events. The analysis in the article is based on four cases, which manifest the policy on four different levels. These cases are: the Treaty of Lisbon (the principle agreement of the European Union), the European Agenda for Culture (the resolution of the European Council which encapsulates the main cultural aims of the EU), EU's program on European Capital of Culture (the longest running cultural program of the EU applied in each member state in their turn)<sup>1</sup> and promotional material and program of Pécs as the European Capital of Culture (ECC) in 2010. The main question is: How is the concept of European cultural identity produced in these cases, and what kind of cultural hierarchies and ideologies are included in this production?

The cases are explored with a discursive approach that enables the analysis of meaning-making processes, as well as the construction of abstract concepts, such as 'unitedness' or 'diversity' of European cultural identity. The theoretical background of the article arises from approaches of social constructionism, which emphasize reality as constructions produced in language, interaction and social practices. In social constructionism language is not just an instrument in communication, but is seen as producing, justifying and changing actual practices (Shotter 1993, p. 6-10, 99-101, Gergen 1999). Methodically discourse studies rely on the theoretical formulations of social constructionism. Even though discourse studies include several different orientations, a common point of view is in the emphasis placed on the constructed character of social entities, relations and phenomena. In the analysis some discourses are seen to produce one version of reality, while some others produce another (Fairclough 1992a, p. 3-4). Critical emphasis in discourse analysis stresses linguistic choices as a use of power (Foucault 1972, Fairclough 1992b, p. 8-9, 2001, p. 36-63). In this article I will define discourse as a particular way of representing reality. These representations, which are expressed in EU's documents, and in the promotional material and program of Pécs as the ECC, construct Europe, Europeanness and European cultural identity and the ideas, mental images, notions and expectations related to them, in a complex way. These representations also indicate the power positions and hierarchies intertwined in the use of language and meaning-making processes. The analytical model in the article is built using the empirical data as a basis. The model reflects the previous studies on the rhetoric of the European cultural identity, but



broadens their findings from the discursive point of view. Particularly the analysis aims to indicate how the concept of cultural heritage is used in the rhetoric of the EU as a marker of cultural unity and diversity in Europe.

In discourse studies, the concept of text usually refers to a larger category than just spoken and written communication. It can be understood in the broader Barthesian sense to also contain visual representations, objects and other meaningful 'language' (Barthes 1973). Norman Fairclough has even used the concept of semiosis instead of text in his theory of discourse analysis to emphasise the complex and manifold character of meaningful expressions or 'language' (Fairclough 2004a, Fairclough 2004b, p. 112). In this article, a discursive approach is used for analysing the empirical material. This material consists of the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Agenda for Culture, the official web page of European Commission, the EU's decisions on the ECC, the Guide for cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture, the ECC application of Pécs, the ECC Program of Pécs, and promotional brochures and the official web page of Pécs as the ECC. All of these materials, in addition to their communicative use, are perceived as contributing to the production of discourses. The analysis of the material requires consideration of their genre. The official EU documents are written in an administrative language, which includes various abstract expressions. Instead of concrete suggestions, the documents bring to the fore idealistic and political rhetoric, which is in many cases created as a compromise to include various contradictory views. In addition to other promotional material the application book tends to market the city or location in a positive and distinguishable way and to present visions and draw outlines of the events and venues. Despite the differences of the genres, the same discourses penetrate the documents in the empirical data.

All the documents in the empirical data include strong ideological rhetoric. In general the EU's cultural policy is based on ideological goals, which are being communicated more or less directly through various decisions, implementation instructions and evaluation reports of the EU's cultural programs. As a consequence the ideological emphasis in the policy produces certain coherence to the communicative practises of the EU. In addition, the consequences also reach the local and regional levels. As in the case of the ECC program, the application books, programs and promotional material of the nominated cities reflect the ideological rhetoric of the EU, sometimes even in the details, because it is a prerequisite for a nomination (Lähdesmäki 2008).

Various scholars (Hall 1990, 1992, Bhabha 1994, Bolhman 2009) have emphasized the meaning of culture for the constitution of identity. Identities have been interpreted as being manifested and located

in culture, language and history. With the concept of cultural identity, scholars have referred to common historical experiences and cultural codes, which are being repeated in communities through various myths, narratives and symbols (Hall, 1990, Giesen 1991). Besides the emphasis on the experience of unity through these experiences and codes, the concept of cultural identity stresses the significance of distinctions for the construction of identities (Hall 1990). Cultural identities are created through a constant dialogue, negotiation and contest of similarity and difference, sameness and distinction. The constructed and multilayered nature of cultural identity is a fundamental point of departure for understanding such phenomena. Cultural identities can be understood as processes taking various forms with respect to a particular time, place and discourse (Hall 1990, 1992). Cultural phenomena are both manifestations of cultural identities and spaces of negotiations and contests where their contents and meanings are formed.

In this article, Europeanness is understood as a discursive cultural identity, which is being produced and narrated in various official and unofficial circumstances. The article focuses on exploring the official production of European cultural identity in the EU's cultural policy. In addition, the article analyses what kind of cultural manifestations the policy practically produces in the context of the ECC, and how the European cultural identity is materialized in these manifestations.

### **Three discourses – ‘unity’, ‘diversity’ and ‘united in diversity’**

Europeanness has been approached in various ways in academic, political and everyday discussions. Besides cultural aspects, the ideas about Europeanness include political, moral and pragmatic meanings. In this article, I focus on the attempts to encapsulate the cultural meanings of Europeanness. In the past few decades, Europeanness has been actively discussed and explored in the academia. These discussions and studies reflect the paradigmatic turn in human sciences. This turn has been characterized as linguistic, narrative or cultural, thus referring to its social constructionist ideas of laying emphasis on narration, the use of language, and cultural phenomena as locations, in which meanings are both consciously and unconsciously produced (Fornäs 1995, Mitchell 1994, p. 11-17, Pulkkinen 1998, p. 51). Since 1980s, various influential scholars have stressed constructivist approaches in the study of nationalism. Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities' and Eric Hobsbawm's notion on 'invented traditions' have been applied in various studies on nations (Anderson 1983, Hobsbawm 1983). Similar approaches have also been applied to analyzing Europe and Europeanness. During the 1980s emerged a new wave of studies on Europe reflecting the

‘invention’ of Europe (Sassatelli 2002, p. 437). In addition, scholars got interested in exploring the ‘Europeanization’ of discourses and practices in various fields of society. As Harmsen and Wilson (2000) note, in these studies the term of ‘Europeanization’ has been used in various contexts referencing the production, formulation and outlining of Europe and in various discourses and practices defining the contents of the concept of Europe.

The new wave of studies on Europe has occurred at the same time with various practical initiatives aiming at the creation of Europe. The European Union has had various attempts to make the European cultural identity more concrete. The EU has promoted a set of symbolic initiatives directed at creating a sense of common belonging that range from a flag to an anthem, a new ritual calendar and a common currency. (Bee 2008.) These kind of initiatives are familiar as parts of nation(state)-building practices. Because of this link scholars have explored the relationship between European and national identities. The conclusions, however, vary greatly: the relationship has been seen either as inclusive or exclusive and at times the different dimensions of identities have been interpreted to be combined in complex ways.

The academic and political discussions on European cultural identity are often characterized by varying emphasis on interpreted unity or diversity of European culture(s) (see e.g. Sassatelli 2009). The different emphases are explored in this article as three different discourses. The discourse of unity stresses the idea of common cultural roots, history and heritage as a concrete base for coherence in European cultural identity. The idea of Europe as a mentally or culturally unified continent is profoundly old – the image of a mentally unified continent was created already in the beginning of the modern era, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Under the threat of Turks, the mental image of Europe as a common home was brought forth in various texts (Mikkeli 1994, p. 185). In general, the definitions of common Europeanness have usually culminated in periods during which the continent has been under a threat. Europe and Europeanness have always been formulated through negations and threats – whether the threat of Turks, Russians, Germans, American or Asian economic powers, or Islam. (Mikkeli 1994, p. 188-189.)

In different phases of history, Europe has been paralleled e.g. to civilization, Christianity, democracy, freedom, human rights, reason, whiteness, mild climate or the West (Mikkeli 1994, p. 161). Along the history, various adjuncts have been explained to characterize the unity of Europeans. Still in the 20th century, the views on common identity and shared destiny have been explained to descend e.g. from the Greek spirit and the Hellenic rationality and beauty, the Roman law and administration, and the Christian religion (e.g. Valéry 1927, de

Rougemont 1966). In addition, the modernism of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century has been explained both as a creation of Europe and as a creator of Europe. Modernism brought fundamental changes to world views, politics and social circumstances, which have been seen as having an effect on the construction of modern European identity. (Heller 1992.)

The discourse which outlines some common and shared elements as a base for European cultural identity often refers to the continuity of history, the legacy of the past and old traditions. In this discourse the present-day is seen as descending from the 'Great Past', which on one hand has cultivated the present state of the common culture, and on the other hand obliges to foster the history of the common culture. In this romantic point of view, the notion of culture refers to high culture and thus emphasizes the preservation of old high cultural objects. Culture is seen as a positive, uplifting and developing entity, which does not include conflicts, dominance or subordination.

As a critique to the previous point of view, various scholars and politics have emphasized the multifaceted variety of cultures as the main character of European cultural identity. European cultures are considered to be characterized by their plurality, and the European cultural identity is thus seen as manifold and plural. This discourse of diversity often stresses the idea of 'Europe of regions' in which Europe is seen as being constructed of regions, counties and cities – that is, smaller units than sovereign nation-states (Mikkeli 1994, p. 190). In recent years, several studies have referred to these ideas as the 'localisation of Europe' or 'Europeanisation of the local' (Johler 2002, p. 9). Diversity in European cultural identity refers in this discourse to the diversity of local and regional in addition to national cultures in Europe. In this discourse, the EU is given the task of protecting Europe's cultural diversity and the diffuse knowledge about cultures in Europe (Sassatelli 2002, p. 439).

In the discourse of diversity, culture is not given the role of a common unifier of Europe. Common culture is not seen as a starting point for European integration or the feeling of belonging. Therefore various scholars have pointed out the nature of Europeanness as a civic identity (Delanty 1995a, 2000, Orchard 2002). Gerard Delanty criticizes particularly the paralleling of European identity and the notion of high culture. In his point of view this kind of paralleling is profoundly nostalgic and essentialist. His criticism focuses on the idea of Europe as a continent defined by high cultural past and shared traditions, which are seen influencing the Europe's present condition as a whole (Delanty 1995a, 1995b, 2000.) Instead Delanty brings to the fore how culture has become a site for new conflicts over identity politics in Europe (Delanty 2000, p. 234.) Some scholars have also stressed how outlining the Europeanness and citizenship in cultural terms has led to racism and xenophobia (Orchard 2002, p. 429). That has led others to argue for a

political approach in outlining Europe and Europeanness. In general, scholars have distinguished the civic/political dimension of European identity from a more culturally-based/affective dimension in the formation of European identity (Bruter 2004, 2005).

However, also the views which stress civic/political dimension of European identity have been criticized as insufficient. In these critical views, culture is seen as essential for a sense of common belonging. A purely political idea of the citizenship is experienced as too abstract and it has been dismissed as an unviable basis for shaping a common identity. Generally in discussions on Europeanness, there is a strong distinction between 'cultural' and 'social' or 'political'. (Orchard 2002, p. 429-430.) In practice these dimensions are often difficult to distinguish.

The most abstract discourse on Europeanness stresses both the unity and the diversity as the key features of European cultural identity – Europeanness is seen to be characterized by the plurality of different cultural units and features, but these cultures are also believed to be connected with some underlying common elements. The principle attempt in this discourse is to celebrate the differences without homogenizing them. This discourse has been criticized as a formal solution with no substance: it has been seen as a superficial motto that can easily turn into a new version of Eurocentric triumphalism (Sassatelli 2002, p. 440). However, the EU still strongly fosters the rhetoric of its official motto 'united in diversity', even though the recent constitutional crisis has questioned the goals and means of the integration process. The European Constitution Treaty, which was rejected through referendum in 2005, included the list of the official symbols of the EU, such as the motto 'united in diversity'. The list of the official symbols of the EU was cut down from the Treaty of Lisbon. The motto, however, as well as the other main symbols of the EU, is used in various official documents and circumstances in the EU. It seems that the more the integration process is undermined, the more the EU aims to stabilize the situation both with the official symbols and the discourse of unity and diversity.

The discourse of unity and diversity is also characterized by the cosmopolitan point of view to Europeanness. European cultural identity is often approached within the frame of cosmopolitan identity. Globalization and internationalism have contributed to the formation of this point of view (Delanty 2006). In addition, this viewpoint stresses the legacy of European history and its cultural heritage. The 'great achievements' of European culture are treated as common cultural heritage and belonging to the shared roots of European identity. Pan-Europeanists or cosmopolitans have thus stressed the role of the cosmopolitan aspects of culture in the creation of Europe – even on the administrative level in the European Union – as is suggested e.g. by the

selection of Beethoven's Ode to Joy as the EU's anthem (Delanty 2000, p. 226).

### **'Unity' and 'diversity' in the EU documents**

The discourse, which stresses both the unity and the diversity in the formation of European cultural identity, characterizes the principle documents related to the EU's cultural policy. In addition, it is used in practice in various actions in the EU's cultural program. These two aims, the unity and the diversity – which can even be interpreted as contradictory to each other – are encapsulated in the following description in the web page of the European Commission:

Facilitating the flowering of Member States' cultures, with all that entails in terms national and regional diversity, is an important EU treaty objective. In order to simultaneously bring our common heritage to the fore and recognise the contribution of all cultures present in our societies, cultural diversity needs to be nurtured in a context of openness and exchanges between different cultures. However, in societies that are ever more multicultural, this diversity requires greater mutual understanding and respect. (European Commission, Culture, Cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue).<sup>2</sup>

In the quotation the contents of 'diversity' are discussed with the terms of national and regional cultures and multicultural societies. The unity is encapsulated to the idea of a common heritage. The cultural heritage is an ambiguous and easily politicized concept. The contents of the concept vary, and it has been put to practice in various ways. The Council of Europe (2005) has defined the concept as follows:

(...) cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.

Besides the vague concept of heritage, the EU policy has even been criticized for the failure of properly define what is meant by 'culture' in different contexts (Gordon 2010).

The two objectives – fostering diversity and common cultural heritage – are tightly intertwined into the current grounding document of the EU, the Treaty of Lisbon. The treaty has been created by 'drawing inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of

Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law' and 'desiring to deepen the solidarity between their peoples while respecting their history, their culture and their traditions'. (Treaty of Lisbon, article 1.) The fundamental point of departure in the treaty is to outline 'the common mental background' of Europe and to explain it as an inheritance, which has generated various 'universal values'. In the treaty, Europe is produced as a 'home' for various universal virtues and a sense of justice. Cultural and religious (meaning Christian) inheritance is seen as an unquestioned source of positive influences to human life. The rhetoric developed from this kind of point of departure is both nostalgic and idealistic.

The cultural heritage is stressed in several articles of the Treaty of Lisbon. Even though the cultural diversity is seen important to foster, only the cultural heritage is seen worthwhile to protect. As it is formulated in the treaty: '[the Union] shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced' (Treaty of Lisbon, article 3). Even though the protection of cultural heritage is seen as profoundly important, the actual order of values comes clear in later articles. The EU stresses the 'aid to promote culture and heritage conservation where such aid does not affect trading conditions and competition in the Union to an extent that is contrary to the common interest' (Treaty of Lisbon, article 107). Cultural values are preceded by economic value.

Similar viewpoints also characterize the European Agenda for Culture. According to the agenda, 'culture and its specificity, including multilingualism are key elements of the European integration process based on common values and a common heritage – a process which recognizes, respects and promotes cultural diversity and the transversal role of culture' (Resolution 2007/C 287/01). The European integration process is intertwined to 'common values and heritage'. According to the agenda, respecting cultural diversity is an essential part of the integration process. Nevertheless, the integration is seen as something generating from the common elements that unify Europe. Even though the agenda stresses cultural diversity and the importance of respecting it, these attempts could also be interpreted as instruments, or phases, in the creation of cultural coherence and common European cultural heritage.

One of the three strategic objectives in the European Agenda for Culture is 'the promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue'. This objective includes in addition an aim of 'promoting cultural heritage, namely by facilitating the mobility of collections and fostering the process of digitisation, with a view to improving public access to different forms of cultural and linguistic expressions' (Resolution 2007/C 287/01). In the rhetoric of the agenda, promoting cultural diversity and

cultural heritage are even paralleled. Through circulating exhibitions and increasing the access to cultural heritage, the diverse regional and national heritage is 'Europeanized': it is made known and recognized in Europe and, thus, represented as European. Another aim in the above mentioned objective is 'promoting intercultural dialogue as a sustainable process contributing to European identity, citizenship and social cohesion, including by the development of the intercultural competences of citizens' (Resolution 2007/C 287/01). Intercultural dialogue and intercultural competences of people are emphasised because of their influence on increasing the social cohesion. (Positive) interaction between cultures is seen as something that will produce a common European identity. Thus the creation of a common European identity seems to form an underlying principle in the agenda. However, in the agenda, the creation of European identity and the strengthening of social cohesion through culture are also seen as instruments for more significant purposes. The starting point in the agenda is 'stressing that culture and creativity are important drivers for personal development, social cohesion, economic growth, creation of jobs, innovation and competitiveness' (Resolution 2007/C 287/01). Economic values thus determine the cultural agenda.

The objectives of the ECC program obey the discursive context of the EU's cultural policy: unity and diversity are intertwined as fundamental principles in the celebrations of the ECC. The objectives of the ECC program are described in the Guide for cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture (2009) as follows:

Over the years, this event has evolved without losing sight of its primary objective: to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, promote greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens, and encourage a sense of belonging to the same "European" community.

The rhetoric of the guide parallels the diversity and the richness, and emphasizes the creation of a sense of belonging, which is obtained through highlighting the common features in cultures and a better knowledge of the cultural features of others.

This discourse, which emphasizes both the unity and the diversity as the principle elements of European cultural identity, inevitably includes a strong ideological dimension. The discourse rhetorically outlines the contents and values of European cultural identity. In the discourse, the concept of diversity particularly refers to both the local, regional and national cultures and to the cultural characteristics of various minorities and immigrants in Europe. As the guide (2009) clarifies: 'This diversity also refers to the cultural input from



all the resident populations of migrants or new arrivals from European countries and beyond.’ However, the common features of European cultures are mostly searched for in the traditions and manifestations of the local, regional and national cultures. This intention is emphasized in the EU’s instructions for the ECC candidate cities. The cities have been advised to ‘highlight artistic movements and styles shared by Europeans which it has inspired or to which it has made a significant contribution’ (Decision 1419/1999/EC), and to ‘bring the common aspects of European cultures to the fore’ (Decision 1622/2006/EC). These instructions seem to indicate fostering the cultures of ‘original’ Europeans as a base for creation of a common European cultural identity.

Paralleling the local, regional and national cultures and the cultures of ‘resident populations of migrants and new arrivals’ in the discussions on cultural diversity brings forth new challenges. In this rhetoric, the local and regional traditions and the traditions of migrants are both seen as elements which produce the cultural diversity. Only the latter is often related to the creation of cultural diversity in everyday discussions. In general, the concept of diversity is seen in this kind of rhetoric as an unproblematic and stimulating condition (Lähdesmäki 2010).

The emphasis of cultural diversity as one of the main objectives of the ECC program is, paradoxically, to produce common European cultural identity and even foster European (cultural) integration. The guide (2009) stresses the importance of creating a feeling of belonging to the same (European) community:

One of the key objectives of the event is to foster the knowledge which European citizens may have of one another and at the same time to create a feeling of belonging to the same community. In this respect, the overall vision of the event must be European, and the programme must have an appeal at European level.

The decision of the ECC program is even more straightforward in its rhetoric: ‘this initiative is important both for strengthening local and regional identity and for fostering European integration’ (Decision 1419/1999EC).

According to the guide, the ‘European dimension’ which is stressed in the ECC program, can be realised either on the level of a common European theme or as a way in which the events are organised. The European dimension in the organization of events refers to joint projects between institutions, cultural operators and artists from different European countries, or to events which involve some European institutions and their policies (Guide for cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture, 2009). The contents of the European theme

are more problematic to outline. The guide advises the cities to focus on the European theme in the following way:

[...] candidate cities must present the role they have played in European culture, their links with Europe, their place in it and their sense of belonging. They must also demonstrate their current participation in European artistic and cultural life, alongside their own specific features. This European dimension may also be designed and perceived by the cities through the dialogue and exchange which they establish with other cultures and artists from other continents, so as to foster intercultural dialogue.

The underlying strategy is to get the cities to present themselves as a part of the common European cultural identity. Through the ECC program, the cultural integration process of Europe, however, seems to be generated as a bottom-up process starting from the cities and their local and regional institutions and the citizens themselves, even though the direction of the process is the opposite. The aims for the European cultural integration are set up in the ECC program and following these aims is the prerequisite for the cities to be nominated as an ECC.

In the EU's ECC documents, the 'European dimension' is often described in terms of cultural heritage. The decision on the ECC in year 1999 was formed on the bases of an Eurocentric idea of exceptional European cultural history: '[...] throughout its history, Europe has been the site of exceptionally prolific and varied artistic activity; whereas urban life has played a major role in the growth and influence of the European cultures' (Decision 1419/1999EC). The whole Europe is explained to share the past of an extraordinary quality of culture. The chosen ECC cities were expected to foster this common cultural history and heritage by linking the city's own cultural heritage to the common European narrative. This idea is expressed in the decision as follows:

Each city shall organise a programme of cultural events highlighting the city's own culture and cultural heritage as well as its place in the common cultural heritage, and involving people concerned with cultural activities from other European countries with a view to establishing lasting cooperation. (Decision 1419/1999EC).

Even though the Guide for cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture (2009) emphasises in the beginning that the ECC program should not only focus on 'architectural heritage' or 'the historical assets of the city', both the decisions on the ECC and the guide itself explicate the expected elements of the ECC program in the terms of cultural and

historical heritage. The appendix A of the guide includes a list of good examples of events with a 'European dimension', which have taken place in the previous ECC cities. The represented events are categorized under nine titles, with most of them either directly or indirectly highlighting the significance of heritage in the making of a 'European dimension'. The categories with direct focus on highlighting cultural heritage are: 'Artistic/cultural movements and styles widely shared and known at European level inspired by the city or to which the city has made a significant contribution', 'Identifying and celebrating aspects of European history, identity and heritage which are already present in the designated city/promotion of European public awareness of the figures and events which have marked the history and culture of the city', 'Focusing on the cultural history and traditions of Europe, particular expressions of the European Union', and 'Events that focus on the talents of European artists'. From the first category the guide gives Vilnius as an example:

Vilnius developed as a Baroque city in terms of cultural identity, on the one hand facing outwards to the Baroque forms of Italy and Central Europe, and on the other facing inwards to the "Vilnius-style" of Baroque expressions, a so-called European Baroque dialect. (Guide for cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture, 2009).

In the rhetoric of the guide, the local architectural style is viewed as a part of the 'common' European architectural history. Common cultural identity of Europe is formed on the bases of well known cultural historical narrative and the stylistic canon of art.

Besides the cultural heritage, the guide and the ECC decisions both emphasise the significance of important historical figures in the making of a 'European dimension' to the ECC events. Two of the categories in the appendix A of the guide directly indicate the significance of the historical figures. These categories are: 'Artistic/cultural leading figures from the city who became "European" artists by their fame and/or their mobility and role on a European scale' and 'Figures which were/are European but have not become as famous as their colleagues'. Creation of a European canon of Great Men seems to characterise the objectives of the ECC documents. This practice was a typical strategy in nationalist attempts to boost national self-esteem and create a national narration of history and an image of a civilized independent society. As an example of this practice, the guide (2009) takes Lille as an example:

Lille 2004 organised a large Rubens exhibition to celebrate the work of this painter, which is deeply rooted in the history of

Flanders. This artist created many pictures for churches and also for European royal families while taking up diplomatic responsibilities all over Europe. He trained with Flemish masters in Antwerp before moving to Italy for eight years. Rubens' art therefore represented a pan-European identity.

The stress on regional or national heroes as the European Great Men does not however necessarily produce any common European canon of significant historical figures. As the research of Philippe Joutard and Jean Lecuir indicates, the people in different countries of Europe tend to value only their fellow country-men as significant European figures. On regional and national levels, people seem to honour their own regional and national heroes. (Laurent 2003.)

In the rhetoric of the ECC documents, fostering cultural heritage is linked to the creation of a feeling of belonging to a cultural community. As the guide (2009) suggests: 'Promoting the culture, arts and heritage of the city can help to improve the city's image and its inhabitants' relationship with their urban environment.' Participation and creation of a feeling of belonging are the core principles in the ECC program. In fact, in the decision made in 2006, the whole program is divided into two sections: 'European dimension' and 'city and citizens' (Decision 1622/2006/EC). The last section stresses the importance of activating people to participate in the production and use of culture. In general, these two sections are closely related – EU's aspiration seems to be to produce a European cultural identity through activating the people to participate in cultural events that represent the diversity of 'European culture' in its various forms (Tzaliki 2007).

In the rhetoric of the ECC documents the stress on participation is also linked to economic objectives. Besides advancing social coherence and creating common identity, the ECC events have to attract tourists. As the guide (2009) advises:

Attractiveness, from local to European level, is one of the main objectives for a Capital of Culture: how can it attract not only the local and national population but also foreign tourists? In the case of a city located in the Baltic countries, for example, the question could be formulated as follows: how could the event be of interest to a Spanish, Greek or Swedish tourist? This is the type of issue with which the candidate cities will be confronted. Any type of strictly local event should therefore be avoided. The promotion of tourism at European level is also one of the challenges of the event.

Instead of local events, tourists are believed to be interested in broader European contents. Thus the cities should promote 'the specific features

of the city as elements of European cultural diversity while conveying an attractive image at international level and arousing interest and enthusiasm in the local population' (Guide for cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture, 2009). As the previous quotations indicate, the ECC program is closely intertwined with the sphere of economics with its emphasis on tourism, place promotion and the fostering of creative industries. The program, which was initiated to increase the meaning of culture and the people's cultural awareness in Europe (Richards and Wilson 2004, p. 1936; Richards 2000, p. 160), has transformed to a significant economical factor in the local, national and EU policies (Herrero and al. 2006). Various studies have emphasized particularly the significant short-term economical impacts of the ECC program in the nominated cities (Palmer 2004, p. 146-151; Richards and Wilson 2004, p. 1943; Richards 2000, p. 173-175; Richards and Rotariu 2009; García 2004). In general, the EU seeks to promote culture as a catalyst for creativity because of the importance of the cultural sector to the economy. Cultural and creative sectors are believed to foster innovation in other sectors of the economy. In the rhetoric of the EU's cultural policy, the economical goals and the ideas of cultural democracy are linked without troubles. The economical goals are not presented as challenges in the realization of fostering cultural diversity, or promoting the cultures of different local, regional, national or minority communities or cultural sub-groups.

### **Stress on cultural heritage**

The discourse of unity and diversity is being articulated in the promotional material and program of Pécs as an ECC in 2010. In the promotional material and program the idea of cultural heritage is being taken as a concrete point of departure for the discourse. Abstract and ambiguous concepts related to the common cultural identity and Europeanness are given a concrete form in various cultural projects.

When exploring the ECC cities in the year 2000, Monica Sassatelli (2002, p. 444) noticed that the existence of differences and a feeling of unity were both underlined in the cities. They were however accompanied by a lack of clear vision of what would constitute this common experience, and a positive connotation was given to differences as long as they remained 'cultural'. Sassatelli states that in nine ECC2000 programs, Europe was not really an issue. Instead of Europe and Europeanness, the real focus of attention was on the specificity of the city itself and on big events regardless of their possible European dimensions. European vocation of the city was usually present in the plans of the ECC, but the aspect was a lot less visible in the final programs. (Sassatelli 2002,

p. 444.) John Myerscough (1994) has made a similar observation in his study of the first ten years of the European City of Culture program: cities have stressed the differences of European cultures more than they have emphasized the common European dimension. Robert Palmer's report on the ECC cities (from 1995 to 2004) indicates how the European dimension is seen important in all the nominated cities. However the value given on the European dimension varies. The report suggests that despite of the aims of highlighting the European dimension and events labelled as 'European', the execution and content of the events may not bring to the fore any defined European focus. (Palmer 2004, p. 85-86.)

Study of the promotional material of Pécs2010 reveals that Europe, Europeanness and common European cultural identity are the core concepts of Pécs as the ECC. The objective of the city is to celebrate 'artistic achievements of European standard' (Takáts 2005, p. 11), 'diversity of European and world culture' (Takáts 2005, p. 21), and 'own cultural experience and achievements which are likely to arouse interest in visitors and guests, those aspects of culture which contribute to the heritage of Pan-European culture' (Toller 2005, p. 7). The abstract ideas of unity and diversity of the European cultural identity are clearly present in the promotional material. However, the ideas are also given a concrete content in the material and in the program of Pécs2010. In the program the 'European dimension' is present both on the practical level, referring to the collaboration between artists and other cultural actors from different member states, and in various European themes on the contentual level. The common European themes are not always articulated explicitly as European – they are however often discursively produced as such (Lähdesmäki 2008, p. 8). Thus the exhibitions of art works by famous European artists and the objects of well-known phases of cultural history in Europe can be considered as indicating a European theme. Moreover, in the promotional material and program of Pécs2010, celebrations of local and regional cultural phenomena (such as the secessionist ceramics of the Zsolnay factory and the architecture following the Bauhaus aesthetic) are regarded as European and as elements of the common European cultural identity. In addition the events presenting minority cultures and intercultural projects can be interpreted as having a European theme. In those events culture is being approached from a supranational perspective, in which the interests are focused on a certain (European) ethnic culture. In the program of Pécs2010 plenty of events focus on the city's different (ethnic) minority cultures: German, Romany, Croatian, Serbian, Greek, Ruthenian, Romanian and Jewish. In the Guide for cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture (2009), the last category in the list of good examples of events with a European theme is in fact titled 'Place and role of immigrant cultures in the city'.

The most common way of producing the 'European dimension' in the promotional material of Pécs2010 is highlighting the significance of the cultural heritage of the city. The cultural heritage is treated both as a manifestation of belonging to the common European cultural identity, and as an indication of variety in the cultural identity, which is explained as characteristic to Europe. Thus the discourse of unity and diversity of European cultural identity is being put to practice. In the ECC application book 'Pécs's cultural image' is presented with emphasis on the manifold cultural heritage of the city. The cultural heritage of Pécs is presented in relation to 'five large European spatial cultural regions and five temporal historical-cultural layers' (Takáts 2005, p. 9). All these spatial regions (the Central-European German cultural region, the (Ottoman) Balkan region, the multilingual world of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the Latin-Italian Mediterranean region and the vast region of East-Central European socialism) and temporal regions (Early Christian-Roman, Medieval, Classicist, the middle-class culture of the second half of the nineteenth century, the modern art of the twentieth century) are said to be manifested in the cultural heritage sites and the architecture of the city. Besides the heritage sites and the architecture, the promotional material and the program of Pécs2010 emphasize the various historical figures related to these temporal layers. In addition the heritage sites often function as locations where events, which are focused on immaterial heritage such as folk and ethnic music, dance or other performances, take place.

The visual discourse in the promotional material of Pécs2010 also stresses the imagery of the cultural heritage. The material is illustrated with various images of classical architecture around the city, classical architectural details and decorations, and public monuments and sculptures. For example in the application book 31% of the images illustrate architecture, architectural details or city views focused on architecture, 19% of the images present public sculptures and monuments or their details, and 12 % other works of art. In a brochure titled *Borderless City* [2009], the numbers are 48%, 18% and 2%. These kinds of imageries invoke a sense of high culture, and specifically high European culture. As Aiello and Thurlow (2006, p. 158) have noticed in their research on web sites of the ECC, these kind of images also inscribe the notion that culture may be reduced to material artifacts, spaces and practices. Cultural heritage might as well be added to the list.

In fact the emphasis on architecture and architectural heritage sites is an often used strategy in manifesting Europeanness. EU's search for a cultural identity is manifested, for example, in the architectural designs on the Euro banknotes. (Delanty & Jones 2002, Aiello & Thurlow 2006, p. 154, Bohlman 2009). In the discourse that stresses the cultural

unity in Europe, architecture is often seen as a common identity marker. For example Delanty and Jones (2002, p. 453-454) state that:

Architecture has thus been the quintessentially universalistic expression of civilization since all the great architectural designs – classical Greek, Romanesque, Renaissance, Gothic, Baroque, Rococo, Modernist – have been universalistic in their self-understanding and one of the most important expressions of European civilization transcending the particularism of its national cultures.

Seeing the canonized architectural styles as shared heritage of Europe is, however, misleading. The canon of architectural styles follows the ideal matrix created in the West-European academia by art historians. The canon recognizes only the most typical, ideal and monumental buildings, which in many cases form only selected and temporarily and spatially limited expressions of architecture. As Aiello and Thurlow (2006, p. 158) remark, European cultural identity is often generated through appeals to an ancient or classical past, which is produced by stressing certain themes and ‘parts’ of Europe. Representing these ‘parts’ as common European culture, is a profoundly exclusive strategy: heritage of a particular temporal or spatial unit is narrated as shared by all contemporary citizens in Europe.

## **Conclusions**

On all discussed levels of the EU’s cultural policy, the rhetoric of European cultural identity and it’s ‘unitedness in diversity’ is intertwined to the ideas and practices of fostering the European cultural heritage. Diversity is often seen in the frame of Europe’s multifaceted heritage by referring to history and legacy. Particularly architecture and the (art) historically canonized architectural sites, monuments and styles are believed to manifest the European cultural heritage. The cultural heritage is not only seen as bearing the legacy of separate European nations or ethnic or regional groups, but manifesting the memory and heritage of all Europeans. Fostering the diversity (and paradoxically the commonness at the same time) in European culture(s) is expected to produce a dialogue and understanding between the people, a participation in cultural events and finally, a belonging to the common ‘European culture’.

The recent and the planned enlargements of the EU have caused a situation in which the EU is forced to redefine itself in relation to its geographical and cultural boundaries. The governing bodies in the EU and the member states will probably continue the discussion on the criteria of the status of the label ‘European’. As Aiello and Thurlow



(2006, p. 149) predict, the governing bodies have to manage the tension between keeping 'Europeanness' sufficiently inclusive to serve the flexibility demanded by global capital, while simultaneously sustaining the sense of exclusivity necessary for making a collective European identity meaningful to European citizens. The stress on heritage sites, monuments and architecture seem to indicate that cultural heritage is seen as broad but also a distinguishing enough phenomena to suit these aims.

In fact this kind of emphasis on common cultural heritage in the production of Europeanness can be interpreted as a reflection of the past colonialist ideology (see Palonen 2010). Historical monuments, buildings and other architectural sites located in certain cities, regions and member-states are explained in the rhetoric of the EU's cultural policy as common and shared heritage of all Europeans. In a sense the heritage is colonized by the EU for its identity political purposes. As the article indicates, through the ECC nomination the EU gets the nominated cities to follow this rhetoric. Through the ECC program, the search for common European cultural identity seems to generate as a bottom-up process starting from the cities and their local and regional institutions and the citizens themselves, even though the direction of the process is the opposite.

Stressing architecture, monuments and heritage sites is a seemingly neutral way to draw attention to the cultural unity and diversity of Europe. However, stressing the cultural unity and diversity from this stand point is profoundly ideological - the focus of the rhetoric is both demarcating and distinctive. The rhetoric tends to emphasize the heritage of 'original' Europeans and the leading social strata, and draws attention from the cultural and social problems of the present day cultural diversity and status of 'European' to the variety and commonness of styles and aesthetics of the past time.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The EU started to select European Cities of Culture in 1985. Since 1999, the chosen cities have been called European Capitals of Culture. In this article, I focus particularly on the EU's decisions on the European Capital of Culture program since 1999.

<sup>2</sup> The formulation of the text in the quotation is based on the texts in the Treaty of Lisbon. Similar formulations can also be found already from the Treaty of Maastricht (1992).

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# *Article II*

## **EUROPEAN CAPITALS OF CULTURE AS CULTURAL MEETING PLACES – STRATEGIES OF REPRESENTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

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# European Capitals of Culture as Cultural Meeting Places - Strategies of representing Cultural Diversity

*Tuuli Lähdesmäki*

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PEER REVIEWED ARTICLE

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## English abstract

The European Union nominates cities as European Capitals of Culture in order to highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens. For the chosen cities, the nomination creates a possibility to promote the cultural identity, originality and diversity of the region and city. The empirical focus of the article is on three cities which were chosen as European Capitals of Culture for 2010 (Pécs in Hungary), and 2011 (Tallinn in Estonia and Turku in Finland). The cities utilize various strategies in emphasizing and representing their cultural diversity. All of the cities stress their location as a historical meeting place of different ethnicities and nationalities. Additionally, the cities stress their architecture as an expression of multicultural layers of the cities. In the cities, cultural diversity is related to the global imagery of popular culture, street culture and contemporary art. In addition, the cities stress the canon of Western art history as a base for common Europeanness compounded of various nationalities and regionalities. One essential strategy is to represent different minorities and their visual culture as signs of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is a complex and political concept. Its definitions and representations inevitably involve power structures and production of cultural and political hierarchies. Hierarchies and political tension are bound to the concept even though it is often introduced as equal and anti-racist discourse.

**Keywords:** Cultural diversity, Discourse, European Capitals of Culture, Multiculturalism, Pécs, Tallinn, Turku



## Celebrating cultures in Europe

Since 1985, the European Union has nominated cities as European Cities of Culture in order to promote the wealth, diversity, and shared characteristics of European cultures, and to improve mutual understanding among citizens of Europe. Since 1999, the chosen cities have been called European Capitals of Culture. The European Capital of Culture program is an ideological construction, which comprises profoundly political content on the local, regional and national levels. The recent past of the European Union has been characterized by discussions on growth and further political unification of the member states. The unification process, which has often been discussed in political, economic and geographical terms, also has a cultural counterpart embedded for example within the ideology of the European Capitals of Culture program. However, some writers have seen cultural issues, such as the European Capital of Culture program as having only minor political ambition in the unification policy of EU (e.g. Landry 2001, pp. 27-29). Even though the cultural budget of the EU is relatively small compared to other expenses of the union, cultural issues have political and ideological significance. The ideological dimension is clearly expressed and internalized in the European Capital of Culture program. Through the program, art and culture are being considered as a unification factor in the rhetoric and ideology of the European Union. Thus, besides the locality, regionality and nationality the European Capital of Culture program consciously and unconsciously produces and promotes 'Europeanness', and European identities.

The European Capital of Culture program enables the cities to present and promote the originality and special features of various cultural unities. Additionally, it enables the cities to propose how the different cultural unities and their features meet, flourish side-by-side, and influence each other. The latter possibility can be explored and discussed with the concept of cultural diversity. The emphasis of the program of highlighting "the richness and diversity of European cultures" (Decision 1419/1999/EC) refers to a discourse in which the concept of cultural diversity has an essential role. This discourse is fostered in the EU's decisions, instructions and evaluation criteria of the European Capitals of Culture program. Thus, the discourse is also followed in the language, visualizations and practices of the cities applying for and obtaining the title. However, the strategies of applying and using this discourse vary in the different European Capitals of Cultures.

The empirical focus of the article is on three cities which were chosen as European Capitals of Culture for 2010 (Pécs in Hungary), and 2011 (Tallinn in Estonia and Turku in Finland). Istanbul and Essen, which were also chosen as the European Capitals of Culture for 2010, are not included in the main focus of the article. The three cities included in the article differ greatly in terms of their social, cultural, economic and political histories. However, the cities also do have several common characteristics – for example, all the cities have been flourishing trade and cultural centers and multilingual forces of their regions since the Middle Ages. Two of them are, or have historically been, capital cities (Tallinn and Turku). Today, they are also characterized by their bilingual populations. Two of the cities (Tallinn and Pécs) are located in former socialist countries. During the last decade, the east-west perspective has lost its former meaning and brought new contents to the old division. However, the former division has reflected the cultural political objectives and practices in the cities. For example, renewing the cultural infrastructure has been a much discussed topic in former socialistic countries after the change of the political system. Nevertheless, the contemporary cultural political strivings in all the cities in case often follow similar kinds of objectives. In all the cities, contemporary art and culture has been developed together with the old urban layers through public art, artistic events, new museums, and various other art and culture

institutions, as well as new or renewed architecture. Despite their differences, all the cities have followed the same instructions and criteria formulated by the EU in order to apply for the title of the European Capital of Culture. Thus, the discussions, definitions and depictions of cultures and identities in the three cities also follow a similar pattern.

The driving question in my article is: How is the concept of cultural diversity adapted and applied to the notion of culture of the three European Capitals of Culture? I will explore the kinds of strategies the cities have used in producing the discourse of cultural diversity. Additionally, the article highlights the rhetoric and ideology of EU-policy in the present concept within the decision of the European Capital of Culture program. I will answer these questions by analysing the application books, plans, promotion, advertising and information material and programs of the cities, as well as the EU's decisions regarding the European Capital of Culture Program. The analysis of the material requires consideration of genre: the application books in addition to other advertising and promotion material tend to market the city in a positive and distinguishable way, present visions and draw outlines on the forthcoming event. Nevertheless, or because of it, the books and promotion material bring out the ideas, ideals and cultural discourses, which are being (or are aimed to be) materialized and visualized in practice during the European Capital of Culture year. The application books have been written by art and culture experts in cooperation with various cultural institutions and communities in the cities. The promotion and information material quotes and reflects the ideas and formulations of the books, sometimes even in detail. The promotion material has been produced by the management offices of the European Capital of Culture cities with advertising agencies.

The theoretical background of the article arises from approaches of social constructionism which emphasize reality as constructions produced in language, interaction and social practices. In social constructionism, language is not just an instrument in communication, but is seen as producing, justifying and changing practices in reality (Shotter 1993, pp. 6-10, 99-101; Gergen 1999). Discourse studies as a method, relies on the theoretical background of social constructionism. Even though discourse studies include several different orientations, a common point of view is in the emphasis placed on the constructed character of social entities, relations and phenomena. In the analysis, some discourses are seen to produce one version of reality, while some others produce another version (Fairclough 1992a, pp. 3-4). Critical emphasis in discourse analysis stresses linguistic choices as a use of power (Foucault 1972; Fairclough 1992b, pp. 8-9; 2001, pp. 36-63). In this article I will define discourse as a particular way of representing reality. These representations which are expressed in the application books and promotion and information material, construct the cities, their population, history and culture and European Capital of Culture events in a complex way. These representations also indicate the power positions and hierarchies which are intertwined in language use and meaning-making processes.

In discourse studies, the concept of text usually refers to a larger category than just spoken and written communication. It can be understood in the broader Barthesian sense to also contain visual representations, objects and other meaningful 'language' (Barthes 1973). Norman Fairclough has even used the concept of semiosis instead of text in his theory of discourse analysis to emphasise the complex and manifold character of meaningful expressions or 'language' (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer 2003; Fairclough 2004a; Fairclough 2004b, p. 112). In this article, a discursive approach is used for analysing the empirical material. This material consists of published texts written in several genres and pictures. All of these representations, in addition to their communicative use, are perceived as contributing to the production of discourse.

## Cultural diversity as a discourse

Cultural diversity can be understood as a hypernym, a word which combines several ways of discussing, defining and representing its focus. These discussions, definitions and representations have been conceptualized for example with the concepts of multiculturalism, interculturalism, cross-culturalism, transculturalism, cultural dialogue, cultural pluralism and cultural mosaic. The definitions of these concepts criss-cross in academic and everyday discussions. Particularly in a non-academic context, the different concepts have often been used as synonyms, or the contents of the different concepts are difficult to distinguish from one another. One of the often referred concepts in the everyday discussions and media texts is multiculturalism. It is also the most often used concept in my research material for discussing and representing cultural diversity. Thus, it seems that in my research material multiculturalism is adapted as a broader concept, which embodies various forms of cultural interaction.

The concept of multiculturalism has been defined in several ways in academic literature. Additionally, it has strong political content and is frequently used in political discussions and decision-making processes. In different contexts, the concept has its own connotations. Moreover, the concept has contradictory meanings, and the phenomena attached to it have raised considerable confrontation. In different countries, the academic and everyday discussions on the concept have greatly varied due to the different kind of history (e.g. colonialism) of the countries and the effects, which the history has had on the present day culture and society. Timo Soukola (1999, p. 2) has crystallized the content of the concept as follows: Firstly, it can be used as a term for politics referring to power conducted by government officials in relation to questions of heterogeneity of culture and ethnicity within the population. Secondly, it refers to a society which is characterized by ethnic and cultural heterogeneity. Thirdly, it can be understood as a social condition, which aims for equality and mutual respect between culturally different communities. In general, the concept refers to a variety of strategies for dealing with the cultural diversity and social heterogeneity of modern societies, as Stuart Hall (2001, p. 4) proposes. Hall has approached multiculturalism as a plural concept, which acquires various presuppositions and aims at different contexts and discourses (Hall 2000, pp. 210-211). In any case, the concept of multiculturalism is used in profoundly ideological ways. Hall (2001, p. 4) has noticed how the 'ism' in multiculturalism converts it easily into a single political doctrine which reduces and cements it. Thus, Hall (2001, p. 4) has outlined the problematics of cultural diversity, for example with the expression of the 'multicultural question'.

Several scholars have criticised the concept of multiculturalism because of its lack of analytical sharpness. It has been seen as being too vague and having lost its usefulness as an analytical instrument (e.g. Pääjoki 2004, pp. 10-11). The frequent use and multiple meanings of the concept have been seen to reduce its descriptive and explanatory content. Thus, some scholars have stressed other concepts related to the concept of cultural diversity. For example, the concepts of intercultural and cross-cultural have been used to emphasize the interaction between cultures and cultural phenomena which fuse several cultural influences, and cross cultural borders. In these views, the concept of multiculturalism is seen as stressing the borders of cultures and the particularism of separate cultures (Pääjoki 2004, p. 27). However, as several scholars have argued, the concept of multiculturalism has already been used in common and academic language for such a long time that it has become unnecessary or even difficult to omit it from discussion concerning cultural diversity and social heterogeneity (Pääjoki 2004, p. 11; Rastas, Huttunen & Löytty 2005, p. 21; Hall 2000, p. 209). In this article, I will use the concept of cultural diversity and outline it as broadly as Hall outlines

the concept of multiculturalism. The concept of cultural diversity is the best in describing the variety and heterogeneity of culture. Cultural diversity is also much more flexible as an academic concept than multiculturalism. Studying only the concept of multiculturalism would demarcate some essential discussions, rhetorics, and phenomena out of the focus of the article.

Cultural diversity is often discussed in the context of contemporary culture and society which are seen to be characterized by globalization and to merge different cultural influences. However, cultural diversity is not only a contemporary phenomenon. National cultures have always been more diverse, internally diverse, and contradictorily self-related, than has been presented in official history writing and in dominant historical myth (Hall 2001, pp. 8-9). Dominant versions of the national narratives have overplayed the unity and homogeneity of nations (Hall 2001, pp. 8-9). Several Finnish scholars have indicated that the Finnish nation and culture, which are often narrated as characterized by monoculturalism, have been profoundly diverse and culturally divided for centuries (Alasuutari & Ruuska 1999, pp. 231-232; Paasi 1998, p. 241; Ruuska 1998, p. 281; Pulkkinen 1999, pp. 133-136; Sevänen 1998, p. 342; Knuuttila 1994, p. 45). In seemingly monocultural societies, for example, social class has distinguished groups of people, their cultural behaviour and tastes in art.

The discussions on cultural diversity have spread over several areas of social life in contemporary societies. Further, they have strongly influenced the art field and aesthetics. However, in the art field and aesthetics, these discussions already have a long tradition. Bhikhu Parekh has outlined different perspectives to explain varieties of cultures within a society. He observes how already Herder, Schiller and other romantic liberals advanced an aesthetic case for cultural diversity, arguing that it creates a rich, varied, as well as aesthetically pleasing and stimulating world (Parekh 2000, p. 166). This kind of perspective often still characterises the discussions on cultural diversity in the art field and aesthetics. In addition to the tradition of the perspective, cultural diversity has been brought to the discussions in the contemporary art field through the emphasis of postmodern ideas. As a cultural discourse, postmodernism has been understood both as a symptom and a mental image of change, in which cultures are seen through the ideas of diversity, variability, richness of popular and local discourses, in addition to practices and codes which resist systematics (Featherstone 1990, p. 2; Smiers 2003, p. 125).

Since the concept of cultural diversity has multiple and contradictory contents it seems reasonable to approach the concept as a discourse. The discourse of cultural diversity forms its object every time the discourse is used and produces positions between the users of the discourse and those who are being discussed and represented in the discourse. Understanding cultural diversity in a discursive sense opens views on the meaning-making processes and use of the idea of cultural interaction in the context of European Capitals of Culture. The aim of the article is not to lean on some particular definition of the concept of cultural diversity or some of its sub-concepts, but to analyse the discursive variety of cultural diversity in the art and culture in the three European Capitals of Culture.

## The discourse of cultural diversity in the EU decision on European Capitals of Culture

An essential factor influencing the discourse of cultural diversity in the European Capitals of Culture is the cultural policy of the European Union. The EU's decisions, instructions, evaluation and

selection criteria of the European Capitals of Culture have an effect on the language, plans and programs of the cities applying for and obtaining the title. Thus, the application books also reflect the rhetoric of the EU, sometimes even in detail, because it is a prerequisite for a successful application. This prerequisite makes the books, and other promotion material based on the application books, quite similar in their views on the meanings of cultural diversity.

The rhetoric used in discussing culture and identities in the European Capital of Culture program, is in itself profoundly ideological. In the decision of the European Parliament and Council 1419/1999/EC the initiative on setting up the European Capital of Culture program is seen as “important both for strengthening local and regional identity and for fostering European integration”. Promoting and encouraging locality and regionality is being paralleled with the integration process of Europe. Ideas of locality, regionality and Europeanness do not seem to clash. Interestingly, nationality is not invoked in the text - fostering European integration occurs via strengthening locality and regionality. Identity is being discursively concentrated towards a smaller unit than nation or state, rather it is being concentrated towards a region or place. In the decision, “local and regional identity” is written in singular form, which expresses it as a coherent and unproblematic entity. The objective of the European Capital of Culture program is defined in the decision to “highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens”. Nevertheless, European cultures are discussed in the decision in a plural form. The plurality of them is not written in terms of multiple national or regional cultures, but as “European”. Although the text emphasizes the plurality of European cultures, it still points out common features in them.

The question about cultures and identities is also presented in the request which directs the candidate cities “to promote dialogue between European cultures and those from other parts of the world” (Decision 1419/1999/EC). In the request the European cultures are seen as distinguished from cultures outside Europe. The possibility for cultural dialogue presumes an existing cultural distinction and presupposition that ‘European cultures’ are limited to the borders of Europe. Thus, the decision creates an impression that the cultures of ‘other parts of the world’ or cultures of outsiders (like immigrants) are not a part of European cultures. It also evokes an idea of pure cultures, not mixed with others. The decision refers in its rhetoric to a particular kind of strategy in terms of the discourse of cultural diversity, however without using the concepts of multicultural, intercultural or cross-cultural. The rhetoric of the decision stresses the particularist view to cultural diversity in which dialogue of cultures prerequisites existence of distinguished cultures. The decision aims to celebrate the particularist local, regional and European cultures.

These notions are in line with general theoretical and critical views on EU cultural policy. EU cultural policy has been interpreted to support the view that regional and European identities and cultures are unproblematic essential entities (Shore 1996, pp. 294-295; 2000 42-54). As Katriina Siivonen (2008, p. 106) points out, in this sense EU cultural policy seems not to stress global, heterogenic and dynamic interaction processes on the micro level, in which cultural phenomena and identification processes are constantly varied and changing. Instead, the policy stresses macro and middle level symbolic structures, such as regions, nationalities and Europe.

# Strategies of cultural diversity in the three European Capitals of Culture

The discourse of cultural diversity embodies a variety of discussions and meaning-making processes which stress heterogeneous cultural interaction. Its main ideas can be approached, described, explained and represented in several ways. In this chapter, I will outline four different strategies of producing the discourse. These strategies are being used and repeated in the application books in addition to the promotion and advertising material of Pécs, Tallinn and Turku as European Capitals of Culture. Some of the cities place more emphasis on certain strategies in the production of discourse. However, all the outlined strategies exist and overlap in some way in the material of all cities. I refer to the different ways of producing the discourse as strategies, which stress the applications' political and ideological content. However, the production may be intentional or unintentional, or even the result of conscious or unconscious practice. Non-intention or unconscious character does not reduce the ideological or political power of the discourse.

As mentioned, all the cities use the concept of multicultural or multiculturalism in their application books as well as in their promotion and advertising material. In addition, the concept of intercultural is used few times in the material. However, the meanings of the concepts are not explicitly explained. As with many other concepts related to culture and identity, multiculturalism is characterized in the material by the self-evidence of the concept. From the obviousness of the concept follows the undefined character of its content. However, undefined concepts have their tacit contents.

In the research material, the concept of multiculturalism is intertwined with the concept of identity. In the rhetoric of the research material, the concepts of culture and identity approach each other - identity is seen manifested in culture and culture seems to determine identities. Additionally, the identity of a place or region and the social identity of the inhabitants seem to merge. A city, its physical and historical features, citizenship of the city and activities of the inhabitants in the city are intertwined in a multifaceted unity where features of the city also define the identity of its inhabitants. In turn, social networks give meanings to places. As Edward Said (1985, p. 54) has noticed, social and cultural identities are framed and given a background through their anchoring to particular places, landscapes and environments.

## 1. Multicultural layers of history

In the all of the cities, the most common strategy in the production of the discourse of cultural diversity is to stress location of the city as a historical meeting place of different ethnicities, nationalities and religious communities. Urban architecture is also stressed as an expression of the multicultural layers of the cities. Additionally, in all the application books multicultural characteristics of the cities are verbalized with the metaphor of the city as a gateway. Cities are described as locations, through which people have shifted and still transit from one cultural area to another.

The stress on cultural diversity and being an open-minded meeting place for people is usually argued by referring to the historical past of the city. In the Turku book it is stated that "Turku has for centuries been a European meeting point where the Finnish, Russian, Swedish, Scandinavian, Baltic and German cultures coexist" (Helander et al. 2006, p. 11). Similarly, the book of Pécs describes:

*Pécs is a multicultural city. In the past it developed cultural layers of Latin, Turkish, German, Croatian and Hungarian origin. Today it is the most important centre of German, Croatian and Romany culture in Hungary. (Takáts 2005, p. 17.)*

The Tallinn book depicts how by:

*Walking the streets and lanes, it is evident that the buildings of Tallinn are as diverse and multicultural as its people. Over the centuries, artisans and architects from Germany, Russia, Sweden, Finland and Italy have worked with Estonians to create the city we see today. (Tarand 2006, p. 11.)*

This kind of perspective of cultural variety and of being both an active present-day and historical meeting point for people with varying backgrounds is a strategy for producing the place as a significant European city. Rather than just being a peripheral, monocultural locality, the city is represented as having connections to other (often more well-known) European nationalities and cultural identities. Further, these views follow the ideals of EU cultural policy, percolated to the decision on European Capitals of Culture, by stressing ideas of cultural dialogue, interaction and, even in some sense, unification of European nations.

Stressing the historical layers of (positive) multicultural interaction in the past centuries obscures power mechanisms which control present day cultural diversity. The multicultural past is represented in books and promotion material as a creative, stimulating and unproblematic condition. Past as well as current conflicts and confrontation related to cultural diversity are turned into a peaceful dialogue, which fades away the hierarchies of dominance and suppression related to confrontations, conflicts or 'dialogue'. For example, the web page of Pécs 2010 states:

*A short walk in the downtown area reveals a multitude of coexisting cultural and historical zones. The Turkish mosque standing on the main square today functions as a Catholic church. The peaceful coexistence of cultures is vividly symbolised by the Turkish crescent and the Catholic cross on the dome of the mosque. (Pécs 2010, European Capital of Culture.)*

The wars of the different cultures, ethnicities and religious groups are blotted out, and the symbol of the change of power over the region, the main mosque, is seen in the context of the European Capital of Culture as a peaceful symbol of coexistence. The two Turkish mosques of Pécs are frequently represented in the imagery of the city as the European Capital of Culture. The mosques are used as evidence of the multicultural character of the city. However, the city does not have a Muslim population originating from the period of the Turkish occupation. Currently less than 200 hundred Muslims live in Pécs – a half of them foreigners. At the moment, one of the mosques serves also as a museum and the other has been turned into a catholic church. In this case, the discourse of cultural diversity is produced from the dominant perspective. Similarly, the conflicts of the past are hidden, when the synagogue of Pécs is represented as an architectural sign of religious pluralism of the city. The destiny of the Jews of the city is silenced in the material. The Jewish minority (approximately 4000 people before the World War II) were transported to Auschwitz in July 1944 and only couple of hundred survivors returned back to the city after the war.

When the cultural diversity is represented as historical layers of the architecture of the city, cultural diversity is being aestheticized as visual diversity. The same mechanism is used when cultural diversity is being celebrated in particular festivals, temporary bazaars or cultural events focused on presenting cultures of particular groups or communities. Cultural diversity turns into experiences of the audience in the folk dance festivals or in the tasting of minority cultures' cuisines.

Aestheticizing or stressing the experiential character of cultural diversity easily obscures the social confrontation and power mechanisms of the discourse.

It seems that by stressing the multicultural past, the three cities try to represent themselves in the application books and promotion material as somewhat more culturally diverse than they are in practice and on institutional level. Comparing the demographic statistics of the cities, it can be observed that in Tallinn the different national, ethnic or linguistic minority groups form nearly 50% of the population.<sup>1</sup> The numbers are much lower in Turku and Pécs. However, the multicultural character of the city is also eagerly stressed in them. This emphasis follows the EU's instructions for the European Capital of Culture candidates as well as more general tendencies in global discussions concerning the promotion of culture and place (Lähdesmäki 2008, p. 12; Lähdesmäki 2007, pp. 457-459). Nevertheless, the application of Tallinn got some critical remarks from The Selection Panel for the European Capital of Culture 2011 about the focus of cultural activities of the city in relation to its multicultural population. The panel saw some questions "on the manner in which the broad spectrum of Tallinn's multicultural population would be included in the ongoing activities, particularly the large minority of people that have ethnic Russian backgrounds" (Report on the Selection Meeting for the European Capital of Culture 2011, p. 11).

## 2. Global street culture and contemporary art

In all case cities, the application books and promotion material utilizes more or less the global imagery of popular culture, youth culture, street culture and contemporary art. Cultural variety is understood in the global frame, where globalised cultural phenomena form a common starting point for cultural dialogue and communication. Stressing globalised cultural phenomena is a strategy for producing the discourse of cultural diversity which does not seek the origins or authenticity of cultural products, but underlines the production of urbanness, urban culture and creativity in addition to experiences within the culturally mixed urban community of the city.

The concept of cultural diversity can be approached in terms of the larger discussion regarding globalization. The second wave of globalization research has focused its interests towards particularist projects and the emphasis of nationalist, regionalist and local phenomena in relation to global processes (Wimmer & Glick Schiller 2002, pp. 322-424). Globalism and cosmopolitanism are seen as being created by utilizing the myths, memories, values, symbols and traditions, which form the cultures and discourses of national and ethnic communities (Smith 1991, p. 159). Global cultural phenomena are constructed through globalizing the particular, ethnic, national, regional or local. Global locality, or glocalism as it is sometimes called, is manifested in the recycling and reuse of cultural products and discourses of particularist, regional and local communities.

In many views, globalisation is seen as a threat which leads to the homogenization of cultures: globalization flattens the particularity of cultures and locations by recycling certain cultural features. Homogenization of cultures is often described via the negative visions of an unwanted mixture of cultural features. Creolisation, transculturalisation and hybridisation – concepts which have been used to describe culture under global conditions – are often seen as threats to unified cultural communities and their identities.

However, the global condition of culture can also be seen as a positive state, which encourages cultural participation and enables creativity, which utilizes diversity of cultural influences. This kind



of emphasis in the discourse of cultural diversity stresses a 'melting pot' type of communality, which is seen as being formed by people coming from a variety of ethnic, national, cultural and sub-cultural backgrounds.

A communality of the inhabitants can also be fostered without referring to any particular ethnicity, nationality or cultural group. Local community and communality can be seen to be formed through people being and living together in addition to a joint consumption and production of the city's cultural variety. It is written for example in the Tallinn application that the city aims to "root the lifestyle of participating actively in creating culture" (Tallinn – European Capital of Culture 2011, p. 3); the city wishes to be...

*[...]a place where both rappers and rockers would feel at home; a city where cosy coffee-shops and noisy nightclubs could exist side by side; where both history fans and teenagers could find something to discover. (Tallinn – European Capital of Culture 2011, p. 2.)*

Particularly, the global youth and street cultures can be seen in terms of participation and creation of imaginative and innovative art and cultural products. In the application books and promotion material of the three cities, global cultural phenomena are presented for example in the imageries of skateboarding, street dance, parcour, pop and rock concerts, street performances as well as spending time in street cafés and other urban areas. This kind of discourse has also characterized the former European Capitals of Culture programs (see e.g. Kylmänen 2001, p. 197).

The strategy of stressing communality, formed through being and living together, is somewhat ideological and political – it avoids emphasizing any particular group of people based on more or less static characteristics. This kind of understanding of 'local community' is very typical in the USA both in the rhetoric of cultural policy and in the everyday speech of citizens. In the USA, the concept of community has in general had very positive connotations and the fostering of it has, therefore, taken on political tones (e.g. Kwon 2002, p. 112). Similar views on community have also been strengthened in western discourses of contemporary culture and urban planning. During the last decade, these views have been stressed in the discourses and practices of community art, community theatre and community dance (Lähdesmäki 2007, p. 374).

In particular, the discussions of contemporary art have stressed the multicultural and global elements as its inevitable and natural focuses. The essence of the contemporary art scene has often been seen characterized by the diversity of art and cultural influences, position taking in mixed cultural flows, and creating responses to surrounding global or local cultural phenomena. Moreover, this kind of position is given to contemporary art in the application books and promotion material of the three cities.

### 3. International canon of high art

The western canon of art embodies the history of the so-called masterpieces made by the greatest artists of all time. These well-known and internationally famous and appreciated artists represent different nationalities as well as regional and cultural groups, though many of them have been profoundly cosmopolitan during their lifetime. The canon of art and the values it comprises has been established through decades and centuries of history writing. As background information and basic cultural knowledge, it forms a starting point for art and cultural discourses in the western world. Because the canon of art has an international dimension, it can be taken as a point of departure

for the production of the discourse of cultural diversity. This strategy is further used in the application books and promotion material of the forthcoming European Capitals of Culture. The international canon of art, and particularly its Eurocentric interpretation, is produced in the texts as a consequence of intense cultural and artistic exchange in addition to influences between European nations, styles, art schools and artists. As it is written in the press material of Pécs:

*The careers of the so-called Bauhäuslers of Pécs testify to the multicultural and inter-ethnic image of the region and represent uniquely that the town and its surroundings at one time belonged – thanks to this group – to the forefront of modern art and architecture. (Pécs 2010, European Capital of Culture 2009, p. 12.)*

Local artists are seen in the terms of canonised art and as part of the international exchange of artistic movements. Exhibiting the canonized artists relates the city to the international discourse of art, which is being placed above the particularist discussions. The application book of Pécs emphasises this discourse by writing as follows:

*Examples of the city's links to the first region [the Central-European German cultural region] include the past directors of the choir and the orchestra of the bishopric, who generally come from Vienna, for instance Mozart's contemporary Georg Lickl, or the architects of the Bauhaus school, Marcel Breuer and several of his contemporaries, who left Pécs for Germany to attain world-wide fame. (Takáts 2005, p. 10.)*

Relying on the western canon of art means that art and cultural phenomena are often seen in a profoundly official sense and in the frames of high culture. Emphasis on the canon underlines also the meaning and power position of several art and cultural institutions. The stress on canonized art and art institutions emphasizes the power structures in the discourse of cultural diversity: canon and institutions often represent the majority while minorities and minority cultures are seen as 'others'. Furthermore, the discourse of cultural diversity is often being produced from the power position of some majority group or culture. This kind of power structure produces a composition, whereby art and culture are easily seen as phenomena, which are created in the institutions and not produced by common people in their everyday life. In that sense, art and culture are seen as phenomena, which have to be brought to the regions (i.e. suburbs inhabited by immigrants and ethnic minorities) which have no art and culture of their own. As it is written in the Tallinn application: "People of culture and cultural institutions in Tallinn have to make it their mission to bring culture to the inhabitants of remote regions" (Tallinn – European Capital of Culture 2011, p. 4). The same idea is expressed in the book of Turku as follows:

*Creating and experiencing culture is encouraged by taking art and culture to the people - from the centre of the city to the suburbs, from traditional cultural spaces to shops, public transport and streets, from museums to industrial warehouses. (Helander et al. 2006, p. 42.)*

What is being 'brought' or 'taken' to the remote regions is the notion of high art in addition to culture and art which is valued in art institutions through the system of canonized art.

#### 4. Representations of Others in the productions of imagery of cultural diversity

One essential strategy of cultural diversity is to represent different minorities and their visual culture as signs of cultural diversity of the cities in question. However, the representations of minorities may

underline the stereotypical imagery, in which the difference is turned into exoticism or tourist attraction. The mosques in Pécs, with their minarets, flat domes and Islamic ornaments form an illustration, which turns the imagery of a religious group into the discourse of cultural diversity. The images of folkdance groups with colorful ethnic clothes on the web page of Pécs2010 (titled as The Multicultural City) visualize the discourse of cultural diversity, which is being performed to the (majority) audience. The otherness in the discourse is being produced with the images which underline the distinguished ethnic originality of cultural traditions and distinct cultural features.

In addition, the imagery in the discourse of cultural diversity utilizes the distinguished ethnicity of people as a base of representing diversity. The discourse of cultural diversity is being produced by representing non-white actors in art and culture events. This kind of distinguished ethnicity of people is often related to suburbs. In general, the otherness of the representations of ethnic minorities and distinctive ethnic traditions is underlined by their fewness in the promotion material. An essential function of these representations seems to be to illustrate the cultural diversity per se. Giorgia Aiello and Crispin Thurlow (2006, p. 156) have made a similar kind of notion when researching the web sites of the former European Capitals of Culture. They note that “with ethnic and other minorities noticeable by their absence, it is in this way that images also shore up the ‘imaginative geography’ of insiders and outsiders of the city as a European Capital of Culture”. The promotion material of the European Capitals of Culture creates the imaginative geography of Europe and image of the ‘true’ and ‘justified’ citizens of the city, region, nation and Europe.

In the application books, ethnicity, immigrants and suburbs form an entity, which is being presented in positive multicultural terms. In the application book of Turku, a project titled Suburbia is described as follows:

*The entire city and its visitors are invited to the appointed suburbs for a variety of events such as a cultural [in the Finnish text written as multicultural] bazaar, a garden party, a parade of old cars, a street painting event, a bus tour, a skate boarding event or a big environmental art project. The projects are designed together with the residents of each suburb and reflect both the nature and atmosphere of the area and its residents. The projects are carried out by the residents of each suburb and the local area committees together with community and urban artists. (--) Suburbia highlights the cultures of suburbs, brings the suburbs and the centre of the city closer to each other and emphasizes the diversity of the city. (Helander et al, 2006, p. 70.)*

In this strategy, the diversity is localised to suburbs and its (immigrant) population. However, the cultural and art projects in the suburbs seem to need an outsider, like community or urban (majority) artist, to direct the community in their artistic activities.

In addition, the suburbs can be left in their own ‘ethnic’ state, and the otherness of them can be turned into exoticism. For example, in the application of Tallinn, the Russian inhabited suburbs are discovered as tourist destinations. Viewed from the bus window, the otherness of poor and ragged suburbs transforms into an urban safari. As it says in the application of Tallinn:

*Both the tourists and the citizens have to get a temptation to jump on a trolleybus or a tram and go to the peculiar, strange and alternative districts full of culture, where concrete walls are covered with sharp graffiti, cool garage-bands play, revolutionary happenings and performances are performed. (Tallinn – European Capital of Culture 2011, p. 2.)*

Image of the culture in suburbs merge with the ideas of creativity of street and youth culture and innovative contemporary art. In these views, vivid culture and artistic creativity exist outside the city center and the official and institutional sphere of art as well.

## The question of power

This article has indicated how the discourse of cultural diversity is produced with several different strategies in the promotion material of Pécs, Tallinn and Turku. All of the cities have stressed their location as a historical meeting place of different ethnicities and nationalities. Additionally, the cities emphasized their architecture as an expression of multicultural layers of the cities. In the cities, cultural diversity was related to the global imagery of popular culture, street culture and contemporary art. In addition, the cities stressed the canon of Western art history as a base for common Europeanness compounded of various nationalities and regionalities. One essential strategy was to represent different minorities and their visual culture as signs of cultural diversity.

Cultural diversity, as well as multiculturalism, is profoundly political concepts and their definitions and representations involve inevitably the power structures and production of cultural and political hierarchies. In the discourse of cultural diversity some groups or cultures seem to be more important than others: only some cultures and groups are promoted in the discourse. Moreover, the discourse itself is often produced from the power position of some majority group or culture. In the application books and promotion material, the discourse of cultural diversity is often outlined narrowly, mainly in reference to nationality, ethnicity or religion, not emphasizing, for example, as much social class, sub-cultures or sexual identity. However, the participation of children and the young are stressed in the material of all three cities.

Can the discourse of cultural diversity ever be produced without the problematics of dominance and oppression? Do the social and cultural tensions always exist between the minorities and the majority? Nira Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 198) argues, that in multiculturalist policies the naturalization of the Western hegemonic culture will continue, while minority cultures become reified and differentiated from what is regarded by the majority as normative. In addition, the discourse of cultural diversity tends to ignore the questions of power relations inside the minorities. The members of minorities are easily constructed as basically homogeneous, speaking with a unified cultural or racial voice. From the point of view of the hegemonic culture, these voices are constructed in a way that makes them as distinct as possible (within the boundaries of multiculturalism) from the majority culture, as an aim to make them 'different'. Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 200) remarks, that such constructions do not allow space for internal power conflicts and interest differences within the minority collectivity. These conflicts or interests may focus, for example on class, gender or politics. Collectivity boundaries are often presented as fixed, static, ahistorical and essentialists, with no space for growth and change. All members of the cultural collectivity are easily seen as equally committed to its culture (Yuval-Davis 1997, p. 200). These remarks can be used in the critical reading of the promotion material of the European Capitals of Culture. Despite their stress on positive effects of cultural diversity and objectives of fostering general well-being through celebrating various ethnic, national and regional cultures, the question of (unequal) power relations characterises the discourse.

It seems that power hierarchies and political tension are bound to the concept of cultural diversity even though it is often introduced as equal and anti-racist discourse. A central feature of the discourse of cultural diversity is that it tends to obscure its power mechanisms. Supporting and celebrating

cultural diversity and cultural heterogeneity of the community may aim to eliminate inequality, however, dominance and subordination may be founded on the structures of the discourse itself.

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- 1 Some examples of the demographic statistics of the population of cities in question: Population of Pécs by nationalities: Magyars 94%, Germans 3,1%, Roma 1,2%, Croats 1%, others 0,7% (Population Census 2001, 2001). Population of Tallinn by nationality: Estonians 52,2%, Russians 38,6% Ukrainians 3,8% Belorussians 2,1% Finns 0,6%, others 2,7% (Statistical yearbook of Tallinn 2008, 2009). Population of Turku by mother tongue (2008): Finnish speakers 88,1%, Swedish speakers 5,2%, others 6,7% (Statistics Finland, 2008). The data collection methods for demographic statistics vary in different cities (and nations), and therefore the statistics are not comparable as such. In addition, the percentage of some minorities may be higher than the statistics indicate (for example in the case of the Roma minority in Pécs) because of the distortion caused by the method used.





# *Article III*

## **DISCOURSES OF EUROPEANNESS IN THE RECEPTION OF THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE EVENTS: THE CASE OF PÉCS**

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# Discourses of Europeanness in the reception of the European Capital of Culture events: The case of Pécs 2010

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## Abstract

Europeanness has been determined in various ways in academic, political and everyday discussions. The concept has become profoundly current in European Union (EU) policy during the past few decades: the EU is paying more and more interest in creating cultural coherence in Europe. The EU has various cultural instruments, such as the European Capital of Culture programme (ECOC), which aim to produce and strengthen Europeanness and cultural identification with Europe among its citizens. The ECOC programme creates an ideological frame for an urban cultural event: the frame directs the reception and experiences of the festivals, exhibitions and performances in the ECOC. Pécs – a city in southern Hungary – was selected as one of the ECOCs in 2010. In the article I analyse the discourses of Europeanness in the reception of the ECOC events in Pécs. The found discourses indicate how transnational spatial categories, such as Europe, and their spatial identities are constantly constituted in local settings through multiple processes in which sensory, perceived, materialized space is intertwined with linguistic and symbolic representations of space, and its subjective experiences, beliefs and uses.

## Keywords

Discourse, Europeanness, identity, space, the European Capital of Culture programme

## Introduction

Europeanness has been approached in various ways in political and everyday discussions. In these discussions the ideas about Europeanness include various geographical, political, moral, cultural and pragmatic meanings, which are interrelated in a complex way. In the past few decades, Europeanness has been actively explored in the academia as well. These studies reflect paradigmatic changes in human sciences. During these decades various studies have stressed social constructionist ideas of laying emphasis on narration, rhetoric, the use of language, and social and cultural phenomena as locations in which

meanings are both consciously and unconsciously produced (Christiansen et al., 1999, 2001; Diez, 1999; Light and Young, 2009; Marcussen et al., 1999; Paasi, 2001; Risse, 2004; Rosamond, 1999; Weaver, 2004 for theoretical discussion on social constructionism in European Studies see Checkel, 2006; Zuern and Checkel, 2005). Since the 1980s

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various influential scholars have stressed constructivist approaches in the study of nationalism. Anderson's (1983) concept of 'imagined communities' and Hobsbawm's (1983) notion on 'invented traditions' have been applied in various studies on nations. Similar approaches have also been applied to analysing Europe and Europeaness (e.g. Delanty, 1995; García, 1993; Shore, 1993; Shore and Black, 1996). These studies are related to a new wave of studies on Europe reflecting the 'invention' of Europe (Sassatelli, 2002). In addition scholars become interested in exploring the 'Europeanization' of discourses and practices in various fields of society. As Harmsen and Wilson (2000) note, in these studies the term 'Europeanization' has been used in various contexts referencing the production, formulation and identification of Europe and in various discourses and practices defining the contents of the concept of Europe.

The 'invention of Europe' and attempts to Europeanize various practices also characterize recent trajectories in the development of the European Union (EU) and its policies. The current political discussions on Europeaness within the EU are often characterized by varying emphasis on interpreted unity or diversity of European culture(s) (Sassatelli, 2002, 2009). The current EU policy rhetoric stresses both the unity and the diversity as the key features of European cultural identity – Europeaness is seen to be characterized by the plurality of different cultural units and features, but these cultures are also believed to be connected with some underlying common elements, such as shared cultural roots, history and heritage (Lähdesmäki, 2011). In general, cultural heritage seems to have a profoundly important role in current production of communality, unity and integration within the EU. Various important EU documents, such as the Treaty of Lisbon and the European Agenda for Culture, aim to foster common Europeaness and the idea of Europe through stressing cultural heritage as a shared legacy of Europeans. In various EU policy documents diverse regional and national heritage sites and monuments are often 'Europeanized' – that is, represented as European and as a part of common European cultural identity (Lähdesmäki,

2011). The 'invention' of Europe as a cultural entity and the Europeanization of cultural practices are implemented in practice in the EU's cultural programmes, such as the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) programme.

Pécs – a city in southern Hungary – was selected as one of the ECOCs in 2010 together with Essen and Istanbul. In the article I analyse the discourses of Europeaness in the reception of the ECOC in Pécs, i.e. an urban cultural event, which is by definition marked as European by the ECOC programme. The main objective of the article is to provide a case study analysis of experiences and notions on Europeaness at a grassroots level, and explore the discursive formation of Europeaness in a local setting. The recent studies on the ECOC programme have mainly discussed economic and social impacts (e.g. Palmer, 2004; Palmer and Richards, 2007, 2008; Richards and Rotariu, 2009), political meanings and practices (e.g. Bergsgard and Vassenden, 2011; Lassur et al., 2010; Palonen, 2010; Sassatelli, 2002, 2009), local and regional development (e.g. García, 2004; Richards, 2000; Rommedvedt, 2009), changes of the city image (e.g. Richards and Wilson, 2004) and communication, branding, or marketing strategies (e.g. Aiello and Thurlow, 2006). In this article I focus on the reception of the programme and its meanings to the audiences in the context of its core theme: Europeaness. The theoretical discussion of the article relies on an interdisciplinary approach, in which spatiality is taken as a starting point of the analysis. The found discourses are discussed in the article from the points of view of human geography by stressing how transnational and global spatial categories, such as Europe, and their spatial identities, such as Europeaness, are constantly constituted in local settings through multiple and interactive physical, social, and cultural processes (see e.g. Massey, 2005, 2007: 10–16). In the discussions and experiences of inhabitants the concepts of local, regional, national, European and global criss-cross and produce each other in various ways. The article aims to analyse the formation of Europeaness as a socio-spatial experience and thus broaden the ongoing academic discussions on Europeaness.

## European Capitals of Culture programme: politicizing culture

During recent decades the EU has made various attempts to make the European cultural identity more concrete (Bee, 2008). Besides promoting tangible common symbols, such as a flag, an anthem or a new ritual calendar, the EU has set up various initiatives that aim to create a shared European culture, produce cultural integration to a European community and strengthen a common European identity. Among the initiatives are the EU's cultural programmes, in which these aims are implemented in practice. Since 1985 the EU has nominated cities as European Cities of Culture – later as European Capitals of Culture – for one year at a time. Over the decades the programme has transformed from a cultural initiative to a significant social, political and economic factor in the local, national and EU policies (Herrero et al., 2006). The ECOC programme has been a real success in its rising popularity, with more cities submitting applications for participation, an increased variety of cultural events taking place in the selected cities, broadened media attention and enlarged budgets (Palmer, 2004; Palmer and Richards, 2007, 2008).

The latest decision on the ECOC programme stresses 'the European Dimension' as one of the two key criteria for the programme (Decision 1622/2006/EC). This dimension is explained as including cultural cooperation between cultural agents from different member-states, and highlighting both 'the richness of cultural diversity' and 'the common aspects of European cultures' (Decision 1622/2006/EC). The emphasis on common cultural aspects indicates one of the principle ideologies of the ECOC programme: creating a shared European cultural identity. The ECOC programme focuses on fostering local, regional and European identities, and advises the cities to present how their local culture is linked to the common European cultural identity (Guide for cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture, 2009). The nominated cities aim to make these policies concrete in their cultural programme during the ECOC year. Particularly for smaller non-capital cities the possibility of promoting the city as European (i.e. important, particular or typical in

European terms) is a significant opportunity for branding the city. The ECOC programme creates an ideological frame for the urban cultural event that directs not only the implementation but also the reception and experience of ECOC events.

Despite the European frame of the ECOC programme, the vagueness of concepts of Europeanness and European identity has been considered problematic in the implementation of the programme. Various scholars have indicated that the 'European dimension' or Europeanness cannot be perceived in the contents of the ECOC events (García, 2004: 114; Myerscough, 1994; Palmer, 2004: 85–86; Richards, 2000: 162; Richards and Wilson, 2004: 1945; Sassatelli, 2002: 444). Similarly the ex post evaluation report on ECOCs of 2007 and 2008, for example, suggests that this dimension was the least emphasized aim for the ECOCs (Ex-Post Evaluation of 2007 and 2008 European Capitals of Culture, 2009). In the programme of Pécs the 'European dimension' was present both at the practical level, referring to the collaboration between artists and other cultural actors from different member-states, and in the integration of various European themes in content. The European themes were not always explicitly articulated as European; however, they were often discursively produced as such in the promotional material of the city, e.g. by using references to Europe's history, cultural canon and canonized works of art, monuments and artists (Lähdesmäki, 2008). The research in question indicates that the audiences in Pécs perceived Europeanness in the contents of the ECOC events. However, depending on the perspectives of those in the audience, the most prominent scale might be not the European, but rather the local, regional, national or even global.

## Methodological and theoretical framework

The article is based on empirical data collected in Pécs, which is the fifth largest city in southern Hungary, with a population of 157,000. The city, and the region around it, is known for its multi-ethnic population and multi-phased history, which has left its marks to the architecture and traditions of the

area. In the past the city developed cultural layers of Latin, Turkish, German, Serbian, Croatian, Roma and Hungarian origin. Nowadays Pécs is an active academic centre and the cultural and artistic meeting point of South Transdanubia, as it had already been during the Middle Ages.

The data was collected during 2010 with identical online ( $n = 532$ ) and paper ( $n = 200$ ) questionnaires, which were available in Hungarian and English. The paper questionnaire data were collected at 23 events during the months of April, May and October. The aim in the event selection was to include an extensive range of the events in the study to represent the variety of the whole Pécs2010 cultural programme. The selected events differed greatly in their size, location, organization, target audience and genre. Some of the selected events were festivals or series of events including various types of performances. The respondents (aged 15 years and older) were selected during or after the chosen events. The selection was based on a focal sampling method (Mony, 2008; Yocco et al., 2009): the data collectors divided the event venue (public space or foyer) into three to five imaginary parts beforehand and aimed to collect from one to five responses from the people who happened to be in the middle of the imagined areas. The data collection was carried out through self-completion questionnaires. From three to twelve responses were collected from each event according to the size of the event. The aim of the method was to increase the randomness of the sample.

The aim of the online questionnaire was to reach the respondents who were particularly interested in the ECOC events, active consumers of culture and well aware of the ECOC programme in Pécs. The sampling of the online questionnaire was based on a combination of convenience, purposeful and snowball sampling (Everett and Barrett, 2009; Patton, 2002). A notice of the online questionnaire was sent to contact persons of 10 different cultural organizations or networks in Pécs. The organizations represented various cultural fields (literature, visual arts, performing arts, heritage and music). Contact persons were advised to inform their own staff and their stakeholders about the online questionnaire. The two data collection methods were chosen in order to provide an extensive

overview of the reception of the ECOC events: the data include responses based both on in-situ and ex-situ experiences.

The socio-demographic background of the respondents differed to some extent between the paper and online data groups. As planned, an online questionnaire reached respondents who were in general more interested in the ECOC year, aware of its contents, and active consumers of culture than the people who responded to the questionnaire in the ECOC events. The age of the respondents ranged in the paper data from 17 to 80 years, and in the online data from 16 to 80 years. The respondents were relatively young: the mean age in the paper data was 38 and only 26 in the online data. The online sample design may have had an effect on the age variance: the online form of the questionnaire may have appealed more to younger respondents, who are more familiar with the Internet and more active in using means of electronic communication. A chance to participate in a lottery offered towards the end of the questionnaire may also have appealed to younger respondents. Several studies have indicated that middle-aged people are the typical audiences of various cultural activities (see, for example, Stafford and Tripp, 2000: 32). However, large-scale urban festivals may also attract younger visitors, such as students (Boyle et al., 2010). Pécs is a university city and the students are important stakeholders in many cultural organizations of the city. Students participate in the cultural life of the city both as audiences and producers of art and culture. In the online data 1.1% and in the paper data 1.5% of the respondents were foreigners. In the online data 48.7% and in the paper data 63.5% were citizens of Pécs. In the online data 7.5% and in the paper data 8.5% of the respondents identified themselves with some national or ethnic minority. The most common minority identities were German, Roma and Croatian.

In the online data 72.4% and in the paper data 58.0% of the respondents were female. In general, women usually participate more actively in various cultural activities (Bihagen and Katz-Gerro, 2000; Seaman, 2006; Stafford and Tripp, 2000: 32). However, the high percentage of women among the respondents may influence the results of the study. Analysing the responses from the point of view of gender, the data indicate that women considered the

concepts of locality, regionality, national culture and Europeanness more positive than men. Only in the case of national culture in the online data did male respondents have slightly more positive impressions than female respondents. In general, women also considered the concepts to be represented in the ECOC events more often than men. Only in the case of Europeanness data did the male respondents find it to be slightly more represented. In the online data, women were more inclined to consider that the ECOC events should represent locality and Europeanness. (Lähdesmäki, 2012)

The questionnaire included open questions on how the respondents perceived the locality, regionality, national culture and Europeanness to be represented in the ECOC events and how they thought they should be represented in the events. In this article I focus on the responses to the questions 'In your opinion, how is Europeanness represented in the European Capitals of Culture events in Pécs?' and 'In your opinion, how should Europeanness be represented in the European Capitals of Culture events in Pécs?' The responses, which varied greatly in their length and style, were analysed by the method of discourse analysis. For the discourse analysis the two data were combined.

The methodological background of the study arises from social constructionism, which emphasizes reality as constructions produced in language, interaction and social practices. In social constructionism, language is not just an instrument in communication, but is seen as producing, justifying and changing actual practices (Gergen, 1999; Shotter, 1993: 6–10, 99–101). Discourse studies rely on the theoretical formulations of social constructionism. Even though discourse studies include several different orientations, a common point of view is in the emphasis placed on the constructed character of social entities, relations and phenomena. In the analysis some discourses are seen to produce one version of reality, while some others produce another (Fairclough, 1992: 3–4). In this article I will define discourse as a particular way of representing reality. These representations, which are expressed in questionnaire responses, construct Europe, Europeanness and European cultural identity and

the ideas, mental images, notions and expectations related to them.

In sociology and human geography various scholars have stressed the meaning of language in the production of space and place (Lefebvre, 1991; Paasi, 1996; Soja, 1996). According to these points of view, environment as known, interpreted, depicted and theorized space is always related to some linguistic practices (Karjalainen, 2004: 49). Place, environment and landscape are saturated by language: they are formed by language-based concepts, stories, descriptions, memories and associations (Nyman, 2004: 129). When space and place have been approached by stressing the meanings of representations of space, or conceived space (*espace conçu*) in the sense of Lefebvre (1991), scholars have often used the metaphor of text in reference to environment and landscape. With text the scholars have referred to a possibility to produce and receive environment as a cultural and social phenomenon, to which meanings are coded and from which they can be decoded or 'read' (Duncan and Duncan, 1988; Kervanto, 1999: 373). Space has been seen as comprising specific codes, established at specific historical periods and varying in their effects (Foucault, 1977, 1998; Lefebvre, 1991: 17). As in discourse studies in theorizations of space, the concept of text usually refers to a larger category than just spoken and written communication. The concept of text has to be understood in the broader Barthesian sense to also contain visual, material, and physical representations and other meaningful aspects of 'language' (Barthes, 1973) such as spatial structures.

An emphasis on language, text and discursive meaning-making processes in human and social sciences reflects the linguistic turn, which has broadened points of view in various disciplines during recent decades (Rorty, 1992). Concurrent constructivist points of view have also been described as subjective, narrative and cultural turns, in which the scholars have stressed subjective experience, narration or cultural relations and communication in meaning-making processes (Ferguson, 2003; Fornäs, 1995: 15). These in turn resonate with a set of trajectories in human geography in which scholars have focused their interests on place rather than space.



When space has been conceptualized as a static, abstract and objective spatial entity, the concept of place has been described as a particular, concrete and subjective spatial experience: space to which subjects relate their own stories, memories, emotions and notions (Casey, 1997: 334–339; Giddens, 1990: 18–19; Hall, 1992; Paasi, 1996: 207–208.). Interest in place has motivated scholars to stress relativity in the meanings of space. In recent decades various scholars have also stressed relational approaches to space: both space and place have been perceived as a sphere of multiplicity made out of numerous heterogeneous entities and the relations between them (Harvey, 1996; Massey, 1991, 2005: 9, 2007: 22; Soja, 1996; Thrift, 1996). Space is considered as being always in a process of being made (Massey, 1991, 2005: 9), perceived and signified from various points of view. Thus, the relativist point of view in human geography questions the categorical separation between the concepts of space and place (Massey, 2005).

The idea of space as produced by interrelated social relations has been introduced by Henry Lefebvre in his influential book *La production de l'espace*, published in 1974. According to him, space produces social relations but is at the same time a product of them. The same space contains various social spaces. In Lefebvre's thinking the sensory, perceived, materialized space is intertwined with linguistic and symbolic conceptualizations and representations of space and subjective experiences, beliefs and uses of space, which all are present in a multi-layered way in our physical environment. Lefebvre (1991: 38–41) has discussed these different aspects of space as perceived (*le perçu*), conceived (*le conçu*) and lived (*le vécu*) space. Edward Soja (1996: 56) has used the concept of Thirdspace to stress how all the aspects of space – 'the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history' – are intertwined.

In recent studies on the social production of space, scholars have emphasized space

as a historical construction. Thus, space is never non-historical. To stress this aspect of space Doreen Massey (2005: 177–180) has used the concept of time-space: spaces are not static entities but continuous processes that are influenced by their past. In addition, the aspect of space as a continuous process has been elaborated further from the point of view of gender studies. For example, Judith Butler's notion of performativity has been recast to theorize the concept of space. Although Butler herself has very little to say about space or place, her ideas about performativity – 'that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains' (Butler, 1993: 2) – have been influential for the critical geography concerned to deconstruct naturalized social practices (Mahtani, 2004: 65). According to Butler (1990), identity is the system of a logic of power and language (i.e. discourse), and it is produced as a performative by active subjects. Similarly area-based identities, such as Europeaness, can be interpreted as performatives produced in various discourses and social practises in space and place.

In the following discourse analysis I understand Europeaness as a multi-layered spatial identity that is constructed as a process in the Thirdspace in Soja's terms. I will apply Lefebvre's categorization in the analysis as a starting point to illustrate the multi-layered nature of the discourses of Europeaness that are being produced in a local setting. The analysis indicates how Europeaness is experienced, verbalized and given meaning using three different conceptual levels of space.

### *Discourses of Europeaness among audiences in Pécs2010*

In the responses of the ECOC audiences in Pécs, definitions, descriptions and evaluations of Europeaness form a web of interrelated linguistic utterances. In this web certain meaning-making patterns emerge, and thus form discourses in which Europeaness is understood and conceptualized in a particular way. However, different discourses are closely linked and form partly overlapping structures. In the discourses of Europeaness reality, imagination, expectations and wishes of certain kind of European features and

qualities intertwine. In the analysis distinct responses cannot be categorized in a way that would allow each response to be located in a particular discourse. Instead, one response can include meanings that belong to several discourses. In the analysis the various descriptions of Europeaness were divided into meaningful subthemes and ordered according to Lefebvre's theory of space. In the following analyses I use various quotations from the responses to illustrate the subthemes and the diversity and multi-layered nature of the data.

### *Perceived Europeaness*

In Lefebvre's (1991: 36–38) theory a materialized, socially produced, empirical space, which is open to concrete measurement and description, is described as perceived space. In the questionnaire data Europeaness was often described in these kinds of concrete terms. These descriptions form a discourse in which Europeaness is perceived as a spatial identity, which can be located to certain kinds of locations in Europe. In this discourse Europeaness is considered as an identity of a particular place (Relph, 1976), such as the city of Pécs, due to certain qualities of its environment.

Since the 1990s various ECOCs have used the programme as a tool to revive the city by investing in various branches of culture and the creative industry. Declining industrial cities in particular have aimed to regenerate their economy through large building projects of cultural institutes, renovating and reusing old factory buildings, developing and repairing public spaces in the city and, in general, transforming the image of the city to be more dynamic, innovative and inviting with the help of the ECOC brand (Oerters and Mittag, 2008; Richards, 2000). During recent years, these aims have still characterized several ECOC cities, particularly in former socialist countries. In Pécs the ECOC nomination meant a start to broad construction and renovation projects, which continued after the ECOC year: major museums were renovated, main squares and parks were rebuilt, several new buildings for cultural use were built, an old ceramic factory was renovated and taken to a new use, the façades of major buildings in the

centre were restored, streets and roads were repaired, etc.

Several respondents in the questionnaire data considered that the repair of infrastructure and buildings in the city reflected Europeaness. Europeaness was described as being represented, for example, in 'the revival of the different parts of the city' (female, b. 1981) or 'Absolutely in the appearance of the renovated squares and the reconstructed buildings. In attempts to develop up to the standards of other European cities' (female, b. 1989). In this discourse Europeaness was considered as a materialized quality of the environment; it meant both plans and a will to develop and modernize the environment, and a systematic and fluent implementation of the plans in order to make the environment more aesthetic, comfortable and cosy to live in. Ideas of a better living standard determined the meanings of Europeaness in this discourse. Europeaness was attached in the responses, for example, to 'economy and development' (female, b. 1986), 'working conditions' (female, b. 1990) or 'reaching the standard of the European Union' (male, b. 1987). It also meant 'high standard' (female, b. 1990) and 'level of quality' (female, b. 1963) in the contents of cultural programmes, and 'high standard, quality and professional arrangement' (female, b. 1988) of them. On one hand, the development up to the standard, which was considered as European, was described as a positive attempt. The development was described, for example, in terms of the globalized market economy and its 'positive' marks in the local environment: 'We have a lot of bars, shops, and restaurants that are so well known all over the world, let alone in Europe! McDonalds, Spar, New Yorker, C&A, and so many more!' (female, b. 1989). On the other hand, the attempts to reach the so-called European standard were considered as a consequence of an external pressure which undervalued the existing living conditions and stressed the appearance of high standards at the expense of the contents of culture and living. The respondents explained these sentiments, for example as follows: 'It [Europeaness] is always emphasized – that we will catch up with Europe, underlining the feeling of being less, which characterizes our nation (male, b. 1989); and 'To a large extent we meet the European global expectations, we

renovate, prepare, transform everything, but it may be that we should not be so worked up about keeping up appearances' (female, b. 1986).

In the discourse some respondents linked the renovation and restoration of architecture to fostering common European artistic styles and heritage. Europeanness was considered as being represented, for example, through 'style characteristics in renovations' (male, b. 1987) and historical heritage sites. As one respondent stated:

The religion is our common heritage as are the old remnants of the Great Roman Empire, which ruled all of Western Europe, and on which the Central and Eastern European culture is based, and which later determined the entire Western European thinking, not to mention the Turkish treasures. (male, b. 1985)

However, highlighting the common heritage as a representation of Europeanness was rather rare among all respondents. The history and heritage that the ECOC events brought to the fore were mostly understood in a national frame and as representing national identity.

### *Conceived Europeanness*

According to Lefebvre (1991: 38–39) space is dominated by various conceptualizations of planners, social engineers, urbanists, technocratic subdividers etc. He calls this aspect of space conceived. In Lefebvre's views conceived space is tied to the order of design, to the control over the production of space, and given its character as a product of its 'engineers' it reflects a receded relation to space. Conceptions of space tend towards a system of verbal signs. According to Soja (1996: 67), these conceptualized spaces are representations of power and ideology, of control and surveillance. In the questionnaire data Europeanness was often perceived through conceptualizations, symbols and descriptions, which repeated the promotional rhetoric and policy of the Pécs2010 organization, the city management and the EU. In this discourse Europeanness was considered as a spatial identity, which was realized in an organized cooperation between various agents in Europe and in representations of this

cooperation. Besides verbal signs, Europeanness was perceived in this discourse through visual and performative signs, such as in visual logos or cultural performances, which were considered as signifying Europeanness.

Various respondents described representation of Europeanness in cultural events in Pécs by stressing the presence of the EU-related symbols, such as the EU flag, in the city, or by pointing to the name of the cultural programme itself as representing Europeanness. The top-down policy and promotional rhetoric was repeated in various responses: 'The whole city is full of plaques of [the EU] support. In addition, every time (for example in the welcoming speeches) the question of Europeanness is addressed' (female, b. 1965). In general, various respondents in this discourse paralleled Europeanness with the EU. Thus Europeanness could be simply described as follows: 'We are an EU member-state, Pécs is the European Capital of Culture in 2010: an integral part of the EU, and this is stressed in the events' (female, b. 1987).

In this discourse Europeanness was perceived as a spatial identity, which was realized in a conceptualized space rather than in a concrete environment. In the discourse Europeanness meant stressing existing broader bonds to Europe, such as 'relations of Pécs to European culture' (male, b. 1978), or 'relations between Hungary and Europe' (female, b. 1949). Highlighting the significance of these bonds and links reveals a wish to belong to that something seen as a common European community. This is in fact one of the EU's main ideological objectives in the ECOC programme (Lähdesmäki, 2011). However, ways of defining Europeanness through bonds and links between Pécs and Europe also included nationalistic motives. According to these views: 'It must be shown what Europe has received from us, rather than what we got from German, Latin, Slavic or English Europeanness' (male, b. 1985). In this discourse Europeanness was seen as a patchwork of various nationalities or ethnicities, which, however, includes hierarchical structures of dominance and subordination between the nationalities. The idea of fostering relations with and bonds to different European nations and cities is brought to more concrete terms

in responses in which Europeanness was seen as being manifested in 'the cooperation with the other ECOC cities' (female, b. 1985), or in 'involving European friend and partner cities in the events' (male, b. 1980). However, in these responses Europeanness is again described in terms of upper-level policy structures – not as a practice which an individual could set up and implement.

The idea of Europeanness as a combination of various national identities and diverse ethnic cultures is stressed in the discourse through emphasizing the significance of presenting cultures and features of other European nations in the ECOC events. Europeanness was considered as being manifested in 'the diverse multinational programmes, of which the city is full' (male, b. 1974), and in 'thematic programmes on European countries' (female, b. 1965). Besides national cultures, Europeanness was related to displaying 'the culture of European minorities' (female, b. 1988), and 'giving an opportunity to ethnicities and minorities to perform' (female, b. 1987). Eventually, Europeanness narrowed in this discourse to a performance, which is being organized in a top-down process, restricted to a stage and controllably performed to the audience in the city.

### *Lived Europeanness*

Lefebvre (1991: 39) describes the space of inhabitants and users – those who seek only to describe rather than control or actively transform the space – as lived space. Lived space is a directly but passively experienced space of everyday life. For Lefebvre, lived space is, however, teeming with sensual intimacies and passionately filled with imagination, and thus offers a terrain for the generation of counter-spaces. In Butler's terms, lived space is generated through various individual spatial performatives through which people use, produce and make sense of their environment and its spatial identities. In the questionnaire data Europeanness was also experienced as a lived space, in which the subjective, sometimes bodily, impressions, emotions and sentiments were taken as a basis for defining identities. In this discourse Europeanness was seen as being manifested in the relations and encountering of

subjects in the city. It was related to a particular atmosphere and its influences to the individuals' direct experiences on the city and its cultural events. Thus, in this discourse Europeanness was considered more as an identity of people (Relph, 1976) than of place.

The most common way to describe Europeanness in the data in general was to stress the presence of people who were considered as 'Europeanizing' Pécs and the ECOC events in the city. 'European personalities' (male, b. 1985) were seen as having an influence on the European atmosphere of the city. Similarly several respondents described how 'the artists from abroad bring a piece of Europe to us' (male, b. 1982). Besides European or foreign performers, the respondents stressed foreign visitors or tourists – 'I see and hear a lot of foreign people' (female, b. 1965) – and international students as a source of an experience of Europeanness: 'Many foreign students live in Pécs thanks to the Erasmus programme, it is such a European atmosphere, cultures already meet, many performers from Europe' (female, b. 1990). In addition, the experiences of multiculturalism and multilingualism determined this discourse. Europeanness was considered as being represented through, for example, 'foreigners, minorities, the appearance of multilingual events' (female, b. 1977) and 'Translations of programmes into foreign languages. Hungarian literature made available to foreigners. Multi-lingual programmes' (female, b. 1979). One of the respondents summarized the multicultural experience of Europeanness as follows: 'Pécs is a melting pot, a great number of European ethnic groups and their values can be found here' (female, b. 1986).

In this discourse the social relations of people were the basis for describing Europeanness. These relations were described as having various values, which were seen as determining European mentality or European atmosphere. These values included 'patience and paying attention' (female, b. 1981), 'positive thinking, inclusiveness, hospitality, solidarity, tolerance and openness' (female, b. 1984) and 'peaceful, helpful and smiling mentality, which characterizes an established peaceful democracy and well-being in Europe' (female, b. 1965). This kind of social awareness of fellow-citizens was considered

as being manifested, for example, in the acceptance of cultural diversity: 'Different cultures can appear together and can be accepted' (female, b. 1989). Thus Europeanness could be seen, for example, as 'symbolizing togetherness' (female, b. 1987). In this discourse Europeanness as spatial identity was determined from a humanist point of view and in opposition to the economic or material value-based determinations of Europeanness. In some responses this kind of emphasis of Europeanness was discussed in connection to the memories of 'a socially better past time':

We need to have an attitude in which we overcome the problems and have a common goal to realize that we work for a common purpose, which would motivate rather than make us discouraged. Yes, it is important to get back to the attitude that the common good is our priority rather than being selfish. (female, b. 1984)

In this discourse Europeanness as a lived space meant stressing various types of grassroots-level cooperation and interaction of people in everyday situations. Involving people in producing culture together and creating culture from their own starting point characterized the meanings of Europeanness in the discourse. In general, openness to interaction was considered as determining Europeanness: 'Several events also point out that Pécs has become not only a European Capital of Culture but also a centre in which people could meet' (female, b. 1989).

### *Europeanness and its Other*

As with all identities, describing and defining Europeanness includes making distinctions and borders (Delanty, 1995: 1–3). In general, identity building needs a reflection of the Other: a reflection of something which 'we' are not or to which 'we' do not belong (Connolly, 1992; Hall, 1990). Similarly the spatial 'inside' is realized only in reference to the real and imagined 'outside' (Massey, 2005). In the questionnaire data, Europeanness was, however, rarely compared with identities or qualities outside its imagined borders. The Other of Europeanness was difficult to perceive from the responses; it rather seemed to exist within and as a part of Europeanness.

National identity seemed to form the strongest counterpart to Europeanness in the data. Several respondents stressed in their responses that Europeanness 'does not need to be represented!!!!' (male, b. 1982) in the ECOC events and the events 'should basically be now about Pécs and Hungary' (male, b. 1985). Many respondents considered Europeanness as an opposite to 'our' identity, which was seen as important to foster and strengthen. As one of the respondent answered: 'It [Europeanness] should be less important than our own identity. We should not belong there [the EU] at all, it [the ECOC events in Pécs] should be about what we are' (male, b. 1986). Some respondents stressed that the rhetoric of Europeanness was strongly promoted during the ECOC year in Pécs, but the ECOC programme as such did not produce any specific experiences of Europeanness. One respondent wrote:

In the speeches of the opening ceremony, performers emphasize that Pécs is the European Capital of Culture. Beyond this, I do not feel 'more European' than before, but this is a good thing, because I think that Hungarian identity is more important. We could say that I am firstly Hungarian and secondly European. (female, b. 1989)

In this response having national identity did not exclude the identification with Europe. However, in some responses Europeanness was considered as a direct threat to a more important national identity:

Primarily, the interests of the city and the country should be kept in mind, and after that those of Europe. The lowest level of Europeanness should be addressed, even if we are members of the EU. We should be members of the union in a way that we would still preserve our identity, and not merge with everyone.

(Female, b. 1989)

In these kinds of views Europeanness was interpreted as a homogenizing identity, which flattens the particularity and originality of cultures. This threat included negative views on the unwanted blurring of cultural characteristics and original cultural phenomena. The responses of both female and male respondents included views in which the national

identity was considered as the main focus of the ECOC programme, or Europeanness as a threat to the particularity of national identity. However, the male respondents expressed their views on the threat in a more straightforward manner. The most nationalist responses were given by male respondents.

However, national identity, like other area-based identities, was often considered in the data as an important element of Europeanness rather than its opposite. Thus, the notion of Europeanness in the data was often based on an idea of multi-layered identity according to which people have various different identities, which activate in certain situations or circumstances. The same qualities and issues can be considered as identity markers of different identities in different situations or circumstances.

## Conclusions

As the study indicates, space can be approached as text, which can be both 'written' and 'read' in various ways. The discursive understanding of space enables the perception of the coexistence of several meanings of space, and the comprehension of the transformation of spatial meanings. As Massey (2005: 9) notes, space includes a possibility of the existence of multiplicity: it is the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; the sphere of coexisting heterogeneity. Similarly Lefebvre's ideas of the multi-layered nature of space emphasize the coexistence of various spaces – both official and subjective – in the same place. In his views the physical, mental and social spaces merge forming a 'logico-epistemological space' – a space in which nature, formal abstractions, and 'space occupied by sensory phenomena, including products of the imagination such as projects and projections, symbols, and utopias' intertwine (Lefebvre, 1991: 11–12).

The heterogeneity, or the multi-layered nature, of perceiving Europeanness in the cultural events of Pécs2010 indicates how the abstract area-based identity was given different meanings through linguistic, social and performative practices. Europeanness was not only received as a fixed identity, but produced and justified in language, interaction and social

practices in the reception of the ECOC events. The questionnaire study itself provided a certain kind of space for the discursive production of Europeanness. The perceptions of Europeanness among the investigated respondents followed the three different conceptual levels of space discussed and theorized by Lefebvre. The heterogeneity of perceptions existed not only between the respondents: the study indicates that one respondent could perceive and describe Europeanness in several discourses and through several conceptual levels of space.

According to Lefebvre (1991: 40–46) conceived space directs or even dominates everyday life in space and beliefs about space (i.e. lived space) in the modern world. However, the lived space has a strong influence on how the concrete environment is perceived and given meanings in everyday experiences. The ECOC programme functions as a conceptual frame for Europeanness in a local setting. It formed a conceived space of Europeanness that directed the interpretations of Europeanness among the ECOC audiences in Pécs. In this discourse Europeanness was approached more from the position of a distanced outsider than from that of a subjective insider (Relph, 1976): Europeanness was something conceptualized, symbolized, narrated or performed. Besides the conceived space, interpretations of Europeanness through experiences of lived space were common in the data. Experiences produced Europeanness in various ways: through a subjective inside position in the place (see Relph, 1976) and as lived in the body (see Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Thus both the conceived and the lived space dominated the formation of discourses on Europeanness in the data; it was less interpreted through concrete environment and materialized places (i.e. perceived space). Even though the ECOC programme can be interpreted as the EU's attempt to attach Europeanness to concrete locations and places in Europe (Lähdesmäki, 2011), the audiences in Pécs mostly considered Europeanness as an abstraction: as a social and mental project, rather than as any localized qualities in physical places.

In the data only a few respondents discussed Europeanness through common European heritage, monuments or historical sites. Descriptions

of Europeanness were profoundly ahistorical. The descriptions contradict with Massay's ideas on space: for her space is never ahistorical. The lack of history in the descriptions of Europeanness among the audiences can be interpreted in several ways: either Europeanness was perceived through contemporariness – as a spatial identity, which has been formed only recently or which is getting its form through various relations in present time – or the history is commonly related to the identity formation on a national level, not on a European level. In fact, when the same audiences described how national culture was represented in the ECOC events in Pécs, one of the most common ways of description was to stress the presence and display of history and traditions in the city. Various scholars have stressed how identity, place, and memory are closely intertwined (e.g. Foote, 1997; Paasi, 1996; Yeoh and Kong, 1999). Particularly national and ethnic memory and cultural identity include strong geographical dimensions, in which the past and cultural heritage is seen as anchored to various – real or imagined – places and landscapes (Said, 1985). Meanings of places consist of both images of the past and experiences of present time (Yeoh and Kong, 1999). In the case of Europeanness, the experiences of the present seem to form a more important starting point for the meaning making of the common European identity.

Even though the respondents emphasized in general the importance of national culture in the ECOC events, they also considered that Europeanness is and should be represented in the ECOC events. Various factors may explain the positive attitudes towards Europeanness among most of the respondents. After the change of the regime in the Eastern European countries, 'European' identity was often brought to the fore when the nations aimed to detach themselves from their previous socialist identities. In this context 'European' referred to adapting the legal system, institutions and economy to the principles of western countries of the EU (Kolankiewicz, 1993: 106–107). Similar adapting was needed when Hungary joined the EU in 2004. On one hand, the high expectations of the relatively fresh membership may have influenced the reception of the ECOC programme in Pécs. On the other hand, the rise of

the nationalist movement in Hungary during recent years may have encouraged some respondents to stress the 'European dimension' in the reception of the ECOC programme. In the responses the European identity was often discussed in relation to the EU and with pride and a feeling of the importance of being a part of the union. On one hand, Europeanness was seen as something that manifests better living standards and a higher level of quality in various fields. On the other hand, it was also considered to be a bureaucratic force with which a national entity must contend in order to make its significance clear.

During the past decades nationalist movements have become stronger in various European countries. In several member-states of the EU, such as Hungary, nationalist parties have gained major victories in recent parliamentary elections (the election was held in Hungary in April 2010). At the same time the EU has faced severe constitutional crises, which have shaken the base of the European integration process in various policy sectors (Calhoun, 2009). In spite of these factors, or because of them, during recent decades the EU has started to pay more and more interest to cultural questions and identification of its citizens. The ECOC programme is one of these tools created to produce Europeanness in local settings. The study indicates that the programme succeeds in producing both top-down-based notions of Europeanness and subject-based feelings and experiences of Europeanness, of which many people become aware because of the frame of the ECOC programme.

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# *Article IV*

## **EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE DESIGNATION AS AN INITIATOR OF URBAN TRANSFORMATION IN THE POST-SOCIALIST COUNTRIES**

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# **European Capital of Culture Designation as an Initiator of Urban Transformation in the Post-Socialist Countries**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Since 1985, the EU has designated cities as European Capitals of Culture (ECOC) for one year at a time. Various ECOCs have used the designation as a tool to revive the city space. The cultural initiatives, such as the ECOC designation, are the EU's political instruments, whose significance has increased during the recent decades, and through which the EU aims to influence various political objectives, such as the unity of the Union and economic growth. These particular objectives were brought into the focus of the ECOC initiative during the Eastern enlargement of the Union. Since 2007, various Central and Eastern European cities have aimed to regenerate their economy through large construction projects, developing and repairing public spaces, investing in creative industries, and transforming the image of the city, with the help of the ECOC brand. On one hand, the investments have recreated the cities with a unified modern look and an up-to-date atmosphere. On the other hand, the ECOC designation can be criticized for homogenizing the urban spaces in European cities by forcing the cities to follow certain criteria and expecting them to obey certain cultural values and trends in the urban development.

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**KEY WORDS:** European Capital of Culture, Urban Transformation, Urban Regeneration, the European Union, Post-Socialist Countries, Central and Eastern Europe

## **Introduction**

Since 1985, the EU has designated nearly 60 cities as the ‘European City of Culture’ or later as the ‘European Capital of Culture’ (ECOC). During the decades the designation has developed from a short-term cultural festival to a year-long urban event which enables economic and social development and regeneration of the city space. The designation has become a sought after brand used by the cities in imago construction, place promotion, and city marketing. The designation of the annual ECOC is a part of the EU’s current cultural policy, which aims at various cultural, political, economic, and social impacts on local, regional, and European levels. The main objectives of the ECOC are to strengthen European-wide cultural co-operation, introduce diversity and common aspects of European cultures, activate people to participate in culture, and foster cultural and social development of the city (EC, 2006a). Producing identification with Europe, economic development, and social cohesion and well-being through culture and creativity are the fundamental emphases in the rhetoric of the initiative. Various political, economic, and social objectives are discussed in the ECOC policy documents in cultural terms (Lähdesmäki, 2011; 2012a).

The ECOC designation enables the selected cities to develop and regenerate in various ways. Usually these development and regeneration projects include a concrete alteration of the city space: upgrading cultural institutions and their facilities, modifying squares and parks, revitalizing less used or declined districts e.g. by cleaning and preparation, public art, or opening new cultural premises, constructing (cultural) infrastructure and buildings, renewing streets, roads and transportation system, and renovating old estates and heritage sites. As Robert Palmer (2004, p. 96) has noted, it is difficult to define which of the major construction and regeneration projects of the ECOCs are due to the ECOC designation and which of them would have been implemented even without the designation. According to him, there is, however, “a powerful psychology of capital projects which makes them susceptible to influence by major events. Such major events have the effect of bringing forward, advancing or, in some way, inducing projects which are often indirectly related to the event itself.” (Palmer, 2004, p. 96.) In general, the development and regeneration practices in the ECOCs aim at the modernization of the old, un-used, or declined urban space by transforming it to follow the

current notions on the ‘good’ and ‘comfortable’ environment. At the same time, the development and regeneration projects enable the selected ECOCs to develop their city image and brand the city with values considered as attractive according to the current ideals of ‘good’ urban environment and ‘liveable’ cities. Whether the development and regeneration projects are or are not a part of the ‘official’ ECOC program, the change of the physical city space nonetheless appears for the citizens and visitors within the frame of the ECOC year. In the media discussions and the marketing rhetoric the renewed city space is usually intertwined with the celebration of the ECOC year.

The cultural programs and actions of the EU are the European Commission’s political instruments through which the Commission influences various objectives, such as economic growth and the integration of the Union. These particular objectives were brought into the focus of the ECOC action during the Eastern enlargement of the Union. Through the renewed ECOC action, the Commission aimed to influence the cultural unity in the renewed Union: the aim was to get the new Member States to bring to the fore their culture and to feel themselves as equals with the older Member States. Since 2009, the EU has annually designated at least two ECOCs – one old Member State and one that has joined the Union after 2004 (EC, 2005). With this policy the EU started a concrete process of cultural ‘Europeanization’ of the new Member States: cities in the new Member States were put into a situation in which they got a chance (or were forced) to compete for the ECOC designation according to the criteria determined by the EU. After the change in the designation policy in 2005, tens and tens of cities in the new Member States started to prepare applications and develop plans in which the cities aimed to present themselves through their culture and city space as ‘European’.

In this article I will investigate how the EU’s cultural policy in general and the ECOC action in particular influence the development plans and transformation of the city space in several recent and recently designated ECOCs in the new Member States in Central and Eastern European countries. The ECOC action has previously had similar kind of influence on the cities also in the old Member States. However, the transformations in Central and Eastern European ECOCs have often been more comprehensive: several smaller cities suffering from declined industries or other economic difficulties have either implemented or planned to implement large-scale physical changes to the city space in order to reach ‘the European standard’, as some of the cities have described their attempts in their application and promotional documents. Cities, which have carried the physical and mental heritage of the past socialist regimes, have aimed to strengthen their belonging to the European cultural and social sphere through the ECOC designation and the regeneration projects it enables. The focus of the article is on the discursive connectedness of urban



transformation and the idea of Europeanness. I will investigate both the transformation and the transformation rhetoric and plans regarding the city space in Central and Eastern European ECOCs from 2007 to 2015, and explore how the transformation is narrated as ‘reaching the European level’, ‘absorbing European values’, and ‘returning back to the European cultural sphere’. In addition I will discuss how the Central and Eastern European ECOCs use the transformation of the cities in their imago building and place promotion in relation to the idea of Europe and Europeanness.

The focus of the investigation is in eight ECOCs: Sibiu in Romania (ECOC in 2007), Vilnius in Lithuania (ECOC in 2009), Pécs in Hungary (ECOC in 2010), Tallinn in Estonia (ECOC in 2011), Maribor in Slovenia (ECOC in 2012), Košice in Slovakia (ECOC in 2013), Riga in Latvia (ECOC in 2014), and Pilsen in Czech Republic (ECOC in 2015). The research data consists of application books, programmes or preliminary program plans, plans of various regeneration projects, promotional leaflets and booklets, official web pages, and ex-post evaluations of the recent ECOCs. In addition, I will utilize the information brought up in discussions with various local cultural agents during my visits and field research in Vilnius, Pécs, Tallinn, and Maribor before and during their ECOC year. In addition to my own experiences on the city space, my investigation will utilize images, videos, and visualizations of the transformation of space included in the research data. In the study, both the physical urban environment and its visual and textual representations are considered as semiotic signifiers of space.

The analysis of the research data is based on the qualitative method of close reading. Close reading is a broad category of interpretative explorations, which enable a researcher to carry out a detailed analysis of phenomena on semantic, structural, and cultural levels. Its basis is associated in critical history with the New Criticism in literary studies (DuBois, 2003, p. 2) aiming at “mindful, disciplined reading of an object with a view to deeper understanding of its meanings” (Brummett, 2010, p. 3). Conceptually, close reading refers to analysis of words and interpretation of texts. However, researchers have applied close reading to various other phenomena, such as media texts, images, films, games, and environments (see e.g. Grant, Sloniowski & Nichols 1998; Bizzocchi & Tanenbaum 2011; Stables 2006). In the article I will ‘read’ the research data including various visualizations and physical environments in the cities as texts in a broad Barthesian sense (Barthes, 1973), understanding the texts as complex symbolic orders produced in human interaction. The starting point for the ‘reading’ is in the assumption that all physical, visual, and textual expressions of the city resonate with each other and participate together in the meaning-making of the city space. The main aim in the article is to ‘read’ the city space by contextualizing and

discussing the meanings of the urban space and its transformation through various cultural political and theoretical views on urban issues. Examples and selected textual quotations from the research data illustrate how these views are manifested in urban space and its representations. The theoretical discussion of the research stems from the interdisciplinary urban studies stressing the points of view from cultural studies, cultural policy research, European Studies, and sociology.

### **The EU's increasing interest in culture and identity**

During the recent decades, there has been a lot of discussion of the strengthening of cultural political objectives of the EU. Cultural policy has become an area of increasing centrality for the Union. (O'Callaghan, 2011; Näss, 2010; Sassatelli, 2009.) The first steps in the cultural policy arena of the EC/EU were taken already in the 1970s. However, the cultural policy initiatives became more active during the 1980s. Between 1984 and 1986 the European Council adopted several resolutions dealing with cultural matters, such as selecting annual European Cities of Culture. The Maastricht Treaty (1992) represented for the first time a treaty article explicitly focused on culture. It allowed the EC/EU to develop cultural policies on top of those of the Member States. (Oerters & Mittag, 2008, p. 75.) During the 1990s and 2000s the EU implemented various new cultural programs and actions offering economic support to inter-European collaboration on cultural projects and the distribution of them. Establishing the ECOC designation as a Community action of the European Parliament and Council in 1999 is a part of this broader policy of the Union.

Besides the ECOC, the EU's interest on urban development and regeneration has been administered through European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), including e.g. the programs of Urban and Interreg, and European Social Fund (ESF). The main aim of these structural funds is to decrease the economic and infrastructural disparities between the poorer and richer areas of Europe. Especially the new members of the Union in the Central and Eastern Europe are considered to contain regions that are in the strongest need for cohesion projects and regional development in order to reach the average level of well-being in the Union. (EC, 2006b, annex III; Cohesion Policy 2007-2013, official web page of the European Commission). In the Central and Eastern European cities the implementing of the ECOC year has usually been combined with major development projects and the construction of urban infrastructure financed with the EU's structural funds in addition to the national, regional, and local capital. Through these funds the urban issues have become a part of the

cohesion policy of the EU – and the city as a topic has been adapted as a part of the EU's economic and competition policies (Frank, 2006, p. 40.) However, in various EU documents related to the urban issues, the idea of the city is not merely reduced to economic or cohesion political meanings. The idea of a European city is also discussed with social and cultural concepts, such as civil society, democracy, integration, participation, history, and identity. (Frank, 2006, p. 43.) The latest decisions on the ECOC action stress similar humanist values as its core focuses.

In general the economic, political, social, and cultural aims merge in the EU's policy rhetoric. At the same time the EU policies have been intertwined with identity politics. Besides culture, identities have become core issues in the EU. One can talk about a more intentional European identity politics guided by the Commission since the 1980s (Stråth, 2002; Shore, 2000; 2004). As Cris Shore (1993, pp. 785–786) has noted, an emphasis of the EU as a 'humanistic enterprise' and a promotion of its common cultural roots and identity can be perceived as having functional utility: it is a tool for promoting the EU's political legitimacy as well as the attempts to bring the different Member States together.

## **Recent discourses and policies of urban issues**

During the past decades, the policy discourses on cultural industry have been combined with the concept of creativity. The concepts of creative economy and cultural economy – which are used and promoted actively in the policy and management talk – are based on the idea of a correlation between cultural and economic development. Thus, culture has become an economic keyword. (Näss, 2010.) In addition, the economic dimension of culture and creativity has been intertwined with the emphasis on urbanity – cities have been considered as drivers of economic growth, and the urban environment as a factor supporting that function (Taipale, 2009, p. 42.) Charles Laundry's (2000) texts on the 'creative city' and Richard Florida's (2002) thoughts on the 'creative class' in the urban environment have influenced many cities – including the ECOCs – seeking to extract value from culture and creativity (Peck, 2005; Campbell, 2011a). However, several scholars have also criticized the recent creativity discourse. According to the critics, the inexplicable and context-specific nature of creativity is missed in the understanding of creativity emerging from Florida's analysis, which essentially sees it in terms of a business-orientated model of problem-solving (O'Callaghan, 2011; 2010; Markusen, 2006; Scott, 2006). In addition, the critics have pointed out the presupposed universality of the regeneration models and strategies that have been related to the discourse on

creativity. Both Laundry's and Florida's thinking include an emphasis on a competition on the status of being an attractive and financially successful city. In the creativity discourse, the quality of urban space becomes an instrument to support the competitiveness of cities. (Taipale, 2009, p. 42.)

Lluís Bonet and Emmanuel Négrier (2011) have investigated cultural policy objectives in Western countries in the 20th century and summarized the development of policy objectives as consisting of four phases. According to them, the most recent phase – starting in the 1980s – is characterized by the emphasis on economic and cultural development. The main domains of intervention of this phase include cultural industries of communication, heritage, multimedia, and digital creation. Its intrinsic goals focus on domestic cultural production, cultural diversity, multiculturalism, and international cultural co-operation, while the extrinsic goals stress employment, competitiveness, economic growth, and co-operation for development. These cultural policy objectives resonate with the creativity discourse introduced in the texts of Laundry and Florida. As emphasized by Bonet and Négrier, the policy objectives have been characterized by instrumental goals: the function of culture has been perceived to increase economic growth and competitiveness of cities and regions in the supranational or global markets. Thus, in the current policy rhetoric and creativity discourse, culture is often discussed as a commodified, productized, and commercialized object for the needs of consumption (see e.g. Ritzer, 1999).

Similar creativity discourse combined with an instrumental emphasis of culture is recurring in the EU's recent cultural policy rhetoric. For example, the ECOC action brings to the fore the creativity discourse in order to assure the applicant cities that the designation "can bring enormous benefits for a city in cultural, social and economic terms, during the year itself and beyond. It is a unique opportunity to regenerate cities, to change their image and to make it better known at European and international scale, which can help to develop tourism." (Guide, 2009.) On one hand, creativity seems to have become a hegemonic term associated with recent cultural policies aiming at economic and social growth. On the other hand, the broad use of the creativity discourse has turned it extraordinary banal (Schlesinger, 2007, p. 377). Similarly, the idea of the 'creative city' has become a utopia mystified in the policy rhetoric by an unquestioned promise of success and prosperity (Campbell, 2011b).

The economic emphasis of the recent cultural policy and creativity discourse is closely intertwined with the practices of imago building, place promotion, and place marketing. Since the 1980s, place marketing has emerged as a key feature within urban and regional policy and development planning (Millington et al., 1997). In public management, place marketing has emerged

as a key concept associated with planning for urban and regional development, attractiveness, and competitiveness. In practice, place marketing is often equated with place branding and promotional activities which are based on identifying and promoting distinctive qualities of the place in order to attract new inhabitants, visitors, and investments (Olsson, 2010, pp. 253–254). Physical environments and material sites function as handy imago resources which can be used, renewed, and re-narrated for the needs of city branding and imago building.

The place marketing, imago campaigns, and competition between cities have brought along a new wave of locality: the fostering of local traditions, environments, and particularities. In search of distinctive locality, designated cultural heritage is increasingly considered as an economic resource for urban and regional development planning. The increased interest in cultural heritage can be regarded as a response to changing prerequisites for urban and regional development during the last few decades – above all tough territorial competition. (Olsson, 2010, p. 252.) Besides the interest in heritage, the recent boom of organizing festivals and various mega-events can be linked to a general increase in competition between cities for the attention of important stakeholders, including consumers, investors and policy-makers (Mutman, 2009). Festivals and events do not only take place in urban public space and function as a neutral reason for people to get there, but events partake in the production of the place in various ways (Lehtovuori, 2010, p. 4). Cities using events, such as art festivals or sport games, to regenerate and rebrand themselves have been well documented and discussed (e.g. Getz, 1991; García, 2004; Gold & Gold, 2005; Richards & Palmer, 2010). The events and the process of obtaining a sought after designation, often function as catalyzing elements for the urban transformation of the city (Mutman, 2009). The ECOC designation as one of the European urban brands functions with the same logic: it creates both an internal and an external horizon of expectation, which contribute to the will and urge to implement transformation and receive it in the city space.

What kind of interventions do the concepts of regeneration or revitalization eventually refer to? According to Robert Beauregard and Briavel Holcomb (1981), urban revitalization means to put ‘new life’ into cities and to upgrade areas for ‘higher’ social and economic uses. Sean Zielenbach (2000) has identified two distinct approaches to revitalization: individual-based approaches focus on people and the improvement of their living conditions (such as preventing unemployment), while place-based approaches stress local economic development and the increase of real estate values (such as acts for producing gentrification). The concepts of urban revitalization and urban regeneration are often used interchangeably. However, some authors, such as

Robert Cowan (2005), have distinguished the concepts explaining urban regeneration to refer mainly to physical change and improvements of the environment, while revitalization is considered to apply more to social improvements and to other ways – such as culture – of bringing a place to life. The urban planners and managers seem to believe that a physical component of environment needs to be recreated in order to bring about urban development and stimulate economic renaissance of a distressed inner city. However, in the last 20 years culture-driven regeneration has come to occupy a pivotal position in contemporary urban policies (Temalová, 2009, p. 15). The combined aims of physical transformation of the urban space and various cultural interventions to it form a common strategy in today's urban planning in the ECOCs.

### **Challenges of urban transformation in post-socialist cities**

During its history, the implementation of the ECOC designation has changed from a (high) cultural 'expensive festival' into an investment in cultural regeneration and infrastructure (Palmer & Richards 2010, pp. 205–205). In spite of the changes, the designation itself has maintained its strong symbolical value for the selected cities, their host countries, and the EU. In fact, the value of the brand seems to have increased during the years, and its meaning has got new connotations when applied in the cities in former socialist countries. Thus, the ECOC designation can be interpreted as stepping into a new phase in 2009, when the EU started to implement the policy of designating ECOCs from the new Member States in Central and Eastern European countries. In this new phase the discussions on Europe and the European identity have activated in a new way and become major focuses of the implementation of the ECOC programs. In addition, the discussions on and the definitions of Europe and the European cultural identity have intertwined with the aims of urban transformation and regeneration.

Although the integration of the EU has increased in various sectors during the recent decades, the old division of Europe into East and West has not disappeared after the fall of communism, but continues to influence the notions of Europeaness on various levels (Crudu, 2011). The Central and Eastern European countries, which have joined the EU at a later stage, are not always perceived to be as European as their Western counterparts (Lee & Bideleux, 2009). Thus, many Central and Eastern European countries share an interest of 'becoming' European or being taken as serious members of the EU. The ECOC designation functions as a possibility to 'become' a meaningful European city on a wider European and global scale. The Europeanization of Central and Eastern European cities may occur through the utilization of

‘Western’ urban symbols and values or ‘common’ European urban history in the transformation of the city image (Kolbe 2007). However, ‘becoming European’ produces challenges for many smaller Central and Eastern European cities when ‘being European’ is perceived by stressing the condition of infrastructure and modern appearance of the city space, as is often done.

The post-socialist and Western cities provide two distinct economic and institutional contexts under which the regeneration and revitalization can be comprehended. The arena for urban regeneration and revitalization of the central and inner parts of the cities in Central and Eastern Europe opened only at the beginning of 1990s, after the collapse of socialist regimes. During socialism the inner and central parts of the cities often declined in economic, physical, and social terms. On one hand, new political and economic conditions created opportunities for regeneration and revitalization of urban zones which offered potential for commercial and residential development. (Temelová, 2009, p. 12.) On the other hand, the re-introduction of the land and real estate market, and the quick emergence of the private development sector, dramatically reduced the ability of planners to prescribe and control urban development (Hirt, 2005). As a consequence, several post-socialist inner cities faced the rapid change of residential buildings into offices, the construction of multipurpose business centers, and the production of facilities, such as hotels and restaurants, for tourism. At the same time, public green spaces in the inner cities fragmented and residential districts outside the center lost their compact urban form. (Sýkora, 1999; Hirt & Kovachev, 2006; Tosics, 2006).

Since the collapse of socialism the post-socialist societies and space have been – and still are today – heavily influenced by economic mechanisms, while the role and power of public authorities, local government, and administrative decisions has weakened (Badyina & Golubchikov, 2005; Kaivani et al., 2001; Feldman, 2000; Temelová, 2009; 2007). In the academic discussion on post-communist planning, scholars have disagreed whether the top-down technocracy has waned and planners seek to increase the level of citizen participation or whether planning remains in a technocratic mode, still largely divorced from direct contact with the public (Hirt, 2005). Whatever the case, nowadays the political and planning systems in post-socialist cities have to account for far-reaching EU regulations and directives (Altrock et al., 2006, p. 2). The mostly negative experiences with centrally-planned economies explain the rather liberal approach towards urban development and construction projects launched after the political transition. The impacts of globalization forcing the former socialist states to quickly adapt to a completely new way of thinking have further contributed to the views on city development: liberalism seemed to be the appropriate answer to the decline of state-controlled

manufacturing giants. (Altrock et al., 2006, p. 9.) The adaption of the current cultural and creative paradigms for the use of city branding, imago building, and increasing tourism industry have also influenced the spatial structure and urban development in the post-socialist cities. Yet the socio-economic contexts and development trajectories also vary within the cities (Temelová, 2009; Altrock et al., 2006; Harloe, 1996).

### **Reading urban transformation in Central and Eastern European ECOCs**

Next, I will explore the diverse promotional and planning material on urban development and regeneration in the post-socialist ECOCs in order to discover what kinds of meanings and values are related to the urban transformation in the context of the ECOC program. In addition to diverse promotional and planning material, the urban environment itself can be 'read' as a planned text, which manifests the ideals and ideologies of the current urban planning.

The data indicates that one of the major components in the ideals and ideologies of urban transformation is the humane point of view on the city. In the promotional and planning texts, the focus was laid on citizens and their experiences of feeling cozy and at home in the urban space, people's possibilities of spending leisure time in the inner city, and enabling the encounter of different kinds of groups and thus bringing to the fore the diversity of people and their cultural practices in the city space. In the concept images of promotional and planning documents the renovated and reconstructed public space was filled with encountering adults, playing children, and chatting elderly people. In the city space, the point of view was manifested e.g. in constructing and renovating pedestrian streets, squares, and parks including new public art and modern urban fitments in order to attract people to spend time and enjoy various communal activities in the inner city. An idea of an Italian piazza was reinvented for a communal use in order to bring the inner city to live. In addition, in Vilnius and Pilsen the humane point of view on urban planning included constructing cycling routes to the city centre. The renovated squares, parks, and pedestrian streets have attracted local people to spend time in the inner city in a new way, as the examples from Sibiu, Vilnius, Pécs, and Tallinn indicate.

The above-described transformations in the inner city space obey the planning principles conceptualized as New Urbanism, which stress e.g. the rediscovery of the city centre and its activities, pedestrian-friendly urban design, diversity and openness of public space, urban aesthetics, quality of design, and sustainability and good quality of life as a base for urban planning (see e.g. Haas, 2008). The following quotation from an article of the program



manager of Maribor2012 illustrates the regeneration ideologies and planning principles related to New Urbanism:

A revitalisation process is successful when a city centre becomes not only a museum space but the focal point of creative energy and a place where people meet and grow together. In the case of Maribor, life is withdrawing from the town centre and moving to the shopping centres, which are as uniform as anywhere else in the world. The town centre must turn into a magnet.

However, this cannot be achieved with investment interventions alone, although some are certainly necessary, as is the reorganisation of traffic. In 2012, culture must completely change the centre of town. [...] The centre must burst into a quality social space. The events must fill not only the existing venues, but also new locations and the streets. We must weave an invisible net of performances and interventions, that indispensable shadow of utopia, which will raise awareness about past identities and show life the way. (Čander, 2011.)

The practice of transforming the former industrial estates to a new cultural use – a trend which started in the Western countries already in the 1980s (see Fraser, 2003) – is still commonly used as a regeneration and revitalization strategy. In all the investigated cities the ECOC year was preceded by large scale plans for renovating old factories, warehouses, or port buildings as new cultural centers, theaters, museums, or for other leisure uses. The declined old industries and the empty industrial estates close to the inner city were transformed, or planned to be transformed, for the use of cultural industries and as places of cultural consumption. The humane and cultural points of view on urban space were, and are, seamlessly combined with the leisure time consumption and, thus, with economic goals.

In general, the investigated ECOCs aimed to modernize and repair the city image through various construction projects. The preparations for the cultural year included initiatives of improving streets and transportation system, renovating major buildings in the city centre, and constructing new buildings, such as museums, concert and conference halls, or libraries. Particularly the inner cities of Sibiu and Pécs underwent a large scale transformation in order to

upgrade the cityscape. Despite of the great plans, not all of the regeneration and revitalization projects have been implemented in the investigated ECOCs. The economic depression, changes in the political climate of the country or city, or the obscurity of governance and management of the ECOCs have had major influences on the budgets and the implementation of the plans in Vilnius, Pécs, Tallinn, and Maribor (see e.g. McCoshan et al., 2010, pp. 55–56, 63–64; Rampton et al., 2011, pp. 52–53, 56–57).

The creativity discourse was used as a motivator for the urban transformation in the promotional and policy rhetoric in the investigated ECOCs. As the next quotation from the application book of Pécs illustrates, the principles of New Urbanism, current regeneration strategies, and creativity discourses formed an ideological base for the urban transformation of the city:

The dilemmas posed for the cities of Europe by the post-industrial era are also issues to be tackled by Pécs; the same processes have taken place here in the past fifteen years. The European Capital of Culture application has enabled our city to develop a strategy that places culture at its centre. As in many other European cities, the task for Pécs is to work out how new life can be breathed into old and empty industrial facilities or entire factories by establishing centres of cultural and artistic activity; how to boost the night life economy of the centre, how to make the everyday life of the city more interesting by transforming the environment in an artistic manner (by new ways of furnishing its streets or illuminating its buildings); how to renew the buildings and public places of the historical city districts by investing in our industrial heritage; how to develop the creative industries of the city and be attractive and magnetic for the creative generations. (Takáts, 2005, p. 35.)

Shifting the declined industries to culture-based economy by investing in the cultural infrastructure of the city is in the promotion and policy rhetoric of the ECOCs often related to the idea of Europe. In this rhetoric, the idea of Europe connotes to a good quality, high-grade practices, and higher standards, as the following quotation from the official web page of Pécs2010 illustrates:

The title gave Pécs a unique opportunity to transform its economic structure into a culture-based economy, saying a final good-bye to the shock and pain caused by closing down its mines. [...] In what follows you can read about the large-scale investment projects of the ECoC programme, about the key projects that are the tools for implementing the planned cultural programmes at a worthy, European level and which provide the necessary infrastructure for the development of creative industry in Pécs in the long run. The European Capital of Culture programme is designed to enable the city to rediscover its urban character, the beauty of living in a city, reclaim public spaces for the benefit of its community, make its streets and environment more liveable, regain the ability to admire its historic heritage and begin transforming it in a cheerful and tame way. The main goal of the investment projects is to provide Pécs with an adequate number of cultural and artistic spaces with proper size that can meet European standards. (*Pécs2010 European Capital of Culture*, official web page, 2009.)

The improved urban conditions and renovated inner city environments were often considered among the citizens in Sibiu and Pécs – the two of the most transformed ECOCs – as manifestations of Europe or ‘becoming European’ (Lähdesmäki, 2012b; Richards & Rotariu, 2010, pp. 150–152; 2011, p. 60.)

In the Central and Eastern European ECOCs, the idea of Europe has faced new meanings and the European cultural identity has been rethought in order to narrate the designated ECOCs as a part of the European cultural realm. One of the major themes in this rethinking is the socialist heritage. The application and promotional material of the investigated ECOCs stresses the socialist history of the past decades and its effects on the social and material conditions of the cities. On one hand, the changes and new opportunities, which the transition to post-socialist era and the membership of the EU have brought along, are discussed in the materials as enabling the cities to return back to a ‘European family’. As the following quotation indicates, the socialist history is seen as a base, which inevitably has an influence on Tallinn. However, the

ECOC designation of the city is narrated as a possibility to ‘return’ to the “European cultural map”:

As a candidate for the European Capital of Culture 2011, Tallinn and Estonia have the potential to return to the European cultural map as full members, forming a new European identity. Tallinn acknowledges that its fifty-year long occupation has left mark on the city and the mentality of its residents. Although Tallinn has almost always been an open and international city, a number of remnants from the past are not worth retaining. (Tarand, 2006, p. 25.)

On the other hand, the cities have aimed to broaden the notion on Europe and European cultural identity by narrating the socialist history, heritage, and experience as a part of Europeaness. All the investigated ECOCs openly brought to the fore their restricted past under the totalitarian regimes. In the programs of the cultural year the socialist history and legacy was and is present in several ways, such as in the exhibition *Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970* in Vilnius, in the exhibition *Viru Hotel and the KGB* in Tallinn, in exhibiting socialist realism in Košice, organizing a series of exhibitions and events on topics related to socialism in Maribor, in the Freedom Street Program focusing on history of wars and political struggle in the 20th century Riga, in organizing a workshop on artists against totalitarian practices in Pilsen, etc. In addition, in the application and promotional material of the investigated ECOCs, the location of the designated cities in the ‘non-West’ was discussed both as a geographical and mental condition. The cities eagerly narrated themselves as being “a bridge between East and West” as in the case of Riga (Rožkalne, 2009, p. 23) or “a bridge from totality to creativity” as in the case of Pilsen (*Pilsen: The European Capital of Culture 2015*, 2010, p. 7). The cities were marketed as mediators of Eastern and Western cultures, as the following quotation from the promotional material of Košice indicates: “The idea of Košice being an interface is based on the rich history and tradition of this city. This place used to be an intersection of important trade routes, and the point where the cultures of the Eastern and Western Europe would meet and blend together.” (Trebul, 2008, p. 8.)

In this kind of promotional rhetoric, the cities are preferably located in the conceptual ‘Central’ or ‘Western’ Europe, thus indicating that the ‘East’ only starts eastward of their location. In spite of the attempts of the investigated ECOCs to narrate themselves as “full-fledged members of a

unified Europe”, as in the case of Riga (Rožkalne, 2009, p. 118), the idea of the split Europe continues to characterize the promotional texts produced in the cities. The idea of ‘East’ and ‘West’ remains and is even intentionally, and sometimes unintentionally, emphasized in the texts. The quotation from the promotional material of Pilsen illustrated this existing split:

Where to start in a country with such a complicated reality, in a country so full of divisions? Why not in a city which offers itself as a city open to new ways, open to an experiment which can fundamentally change other municipalities and their citizens, which can indicate the future path. In a city which has the right geographical location to become a bridge between “old” and “new” Europe. [...] The concept of an open creative city invites a huge change; the durable and sustainable change of a provincial city into a real European cultural metropolis. Such a transformation is not a question of one, two or even five years. We see it as a long-term process for which the European Capital of Culture title might become the essential and exceptional impetus. Pilsen wants to open its arms to Europe naturally, peacefully and in an innovative manner. The city wants to be on the cultural map of Europe permanently and to positively use the reputation of its name; the city gave its name to the most famous beer in the world. (*Pilsen: The European Capital of Culture 2015*, 2010, p. 8).

Even though the investigated ECOCs highlighted the existing (mental) split of Europe to ‘East’ and ‘West’, the promotional and marketing material of the cities brought to the fore a will to belong to the West and be seen as a Western (European) city. In this attempt the ECOC designation could be used as a tool in the imago building, aiming to influence foreigners’ notions on the city. For example Tallinn was ‘regrouped’ to the mental and cultural map of Europe in the application book as follows:

The appearance and substance of Tallinn impacts one’s general impression of the whole Estonia. In this way, Tallinn can help to rid Estonia of Epithets still used in Europe such as “new” or “post-

communist”. A Nordic city by tradition, it was occupied by the USSR that brought the erroneous stigma of being Russian based culture. Tallinn is eager to host international events, as well as serve as the permanent host for at least some EU Institutions. International development effectively takes place in countries where security and respect for the environment are high priorities. The honour of being the European Capital of Culture would be the ideal opportunity for Tallinn to present itself as a safe, clean, hi-tech and environmentally friendly European city aiming for sustainable growth in the future. (Tarand, 2006, p. 26.)

As the previous quotations illustrate, the ECOC designation enables imago campaigns and place promotion in order to attract tourists and convince both the ‘old’ Europe or the ‘West’ and the citizens of the city itself that the city belongs to the European cultural realm. As the application book of the Tallinn states, the aim of the cultural year is to help the citizens to create a new European identity: “Tallinn’s leaders envisage being the cultural capital as one part of a far reaching process of transforming urban spaces into cultural centres and introducing Estonian culture to the rest of Europe while helping Estonians create a new European identity.” (Tarand, 2006, p. 17.)

The transformation of urban space has a major role in the attempts to ‘regroup’ the city, reconstruct its imago, and influence the identity production of its citizens. In Tallinn, for example, the regeneration and urban transformation processes during the ECOC year were focused on the seashore, which use to be closed to the citizens during the Soviet era. The coastal strip was used by the ports and industry and formed a barrier between the city and the sea. The focus of the urban transformation and regeneration of Tallinn2011 was on the seashore. Besides various initiatives of transforming the former industrial estates, warehouses, and unused spaces to cultural and leisure use, the promotional material, the logo, and the slogan of Tallinn2011 relied on seashore themes. The program manager of Tallinn described in a Tallinn2011 newsletter the aims to change Tallinn’s image and environment into that of a cozy and modern marine city by comparing it to other Western coastal cities:

Of course we would want Tallinn to be Venice or at least Helsinki. Or Stockholm. In Helsinki you can nicely sail a boat to the city centre and anchor there. We are a long way from this kind of practise; the

interim occupation hindered us to visit the waterfront, and worst of all, it hindered our possibility to go to the sea. [...] Now is the time for new residential areas to rise on the waterfront together with boat harbours, cafés, ateliers, and all kinds of related things. (Sihvart, 2011, pp. 4–5.)

### **Conclusions: particularization or homogenization of the city space?**

The competition for the ECOC designation is tough: candidate cities are using enormous amount of time and expenses to plan cultural strategies and to prepare the city to win the title. Those cities that lose the competition usually aim to utilize the planning on a smaller scale. In some candidate cities, the preparatory work has included e.g. building new cultural infrastructure. These developments have had an influence on the cities' cultural life, even if they have eventually lost the competition. Thus, both the ECOCs and the tens and tens of candidate cities have developed, reorganized, and rebuilt the cultural scene and infrastructure according to the criteria determined by the EU. In this sense the ECOC action has had and continues to have a broad effect on the forms of urban development and cultural regeneration in Europe, as well as on the unification of urban space in Europe in general.

The ECOC designation has had diverse influences on the investigated cities: it has changed the city space and the citizens' everyday life in various ways. Investments in the cultural infrastructure, improvements of the buildings and public spaces in the city, and implementing various cultural projects which reflect the current trends in cultural policy have together recreated the (inner) cities with a modern atmosphere and groomed look. On one hand, various cultural agents and citizens of the ECOCs have related these changes to 'Europeanness'. According to these views, 'European' is paralleled to modernization, welfare, and quality of environment. On the other hand, the ECOC action can be criticized for unifying the cities in Europe by expecting them to produce culture with similar values and reconstruct the urban environment with similar kinds of ideals. In spite of the attempt to search for local particularities and characteristics, the striving for competitiveness has made the cities aim for similar urban conditions.

Thus, the ECOC action can be considered as a policy tool, which eventually narrows the cultural richness in Europe by ignoring the already existing local and grass-root level cultural phenomena, and by demanding development that follows current regeneration and development trends. Even though the EU's aims for the designation is to bring to the fore the diversity of

local and regional culture in Europe, it simultaneously homogenizes the cultural offerings due to the structure which forces the cities to follow certain criteria, obey certain cultural values and trends, and compete against other cities for the designation. In this sense the ECOC designation has a broad effect on the certain type of cultural integration of the cities and the Member States into Europe and into the EU. In general, entrepreneurial planning and the manifold 'glocal' effects of inter-urban competition and image marketing tend to homogenize public urban space on consumerist and aestheticized grounds (Groth & Corijn, 2005, p. 513; Lehtovuori, 2010, p. 1). In the investigated ECOCs the consumerist and aesthetic grounds determined the commonly repeated creativity discourse which embraced both economy-based and cultural arguments on urban regeneration, revitalization, and transformation of the city space.

Quite often the designated ECOCs are not political or economic centers of their countries but rather provincial towns, such as in the case of Sibiu, Pécs, Košice, and Maribor. It is much to expect provincial or former industrial centers of Europe to compete, in a sustainable way, with the well-known real and symbolic cultural resources of Europe's long-standing cultural centers (O'Callaghan, 2011; Griffiths, 2006, p. 418). Even though the ECOC designation would not succeed in upraising the city into a cultural centre recognized across Europe, the designation has major impacts on the recognition and cultural awareness on the local, regional, and national levels. The ECOCs involve a number of cultural agents, artists, planners, and citizens to the production of the cultural year and, thus, influence people's notions of the city and its identity.

Even though the long-term impacts of the designated ECOCs are difficult to evaluate, the transformation of the urban space will stay as a permanent mark from the ECOC year. Already the name of the designation itself attaches the ideas of Europe and Europeaness to the transformation of the city, its restored cityscape, reconstructed infrastructure, and improved condition. In addition, the designated ECOCs in the Central and Eastern European countries narrate the various transformations of the urban space as manifestations of a 'European standard', or as indications of belonging or 'returning back' to the European cultural realm. In these cities the European cultural identity is at the same time rewritten by extending the European experience with the history, heritage, and experience of socialism and totalitarian rule. Even though the ECOC action functions as a cultural political tool for urban and cultural integration between the 'new' and 'old' Member States of the EU, in the application and promotional rhetoric of the designated ECOC in the 'new' Member States the split of Europe continues to exist. The urge to reach the 'European standard' and the interest to convince the others



(the ‘West’) of belonging to the European cultural realm are indications of this continuing division and existing hierarchy in Europe.

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# *Article V*

## **CULTURAL ACTIVISM AS A COUNTER-DISCOURSE TO THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE PROGRAM: THE CASE OF TURKU2011**

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# Cultural activism as a counter-discourse to the European Capital of Culture programme: The case of Turku 2011

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## Abstract

Each year the European Union designates one or more cities with the competed-for city brand of European Capital of Culture (ECOC). In several recent ECOCs, such as in Turku, Finland, the management and organisation of the events have caused tension among the citizens regarding decision-making, financing and power over use of the urban space. The focus of the article is on analysis of the discursive dynamics of local activists and their project 'Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011'. By emphasising the cultural analysis of activism, the article indicates how the counter-discourse of the activists was produced through cultural production. The project produced a strong movement culture with common practices, anti-neoliberal values and world views. Through cultural production and movement culture, the project participated in the creation of subculture as a fluid and flexible cultural category expressed through stylistic and lifestyle choices.

## Keywords

Counter-discourse, cultural activism, European Capital of Culture, subculture, urban space

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## Introduction

### *The European Capital of Culture as contested fields of meaning*

The annual designation of European Capital of Culture is one of the EU's longest-running cultural initiatives. Since 1985, the European Union (EU) has designated nearly 60 cities – first as European Cities of Culture, and later as European Capitals of Culture (ECOC). During these decades the designation has grown into a competed-for city brand that enables the cities to promote their cultural activities, develop their cultural sectors and renew their image. The aims of the designation have transformed and focused during the decades: the political and ideological contents have become more apparent in the EU rhetoric of the initiative. According to the latest EU decision on ECOC, the cultural programme of the designated cities has to follow two main criteria: 'the European Dimension' and 'City and the Citizens'. The first criterion requires cities to foster cooperation between cultural operators, artists and cities from other Member States, highlight the richness of cultural diversity in Europe, and bring to the fore the common aspects of European cultures. The second criterion places emphasis on the cities to foster the participation of citizens living in the city and its surroundings, raise their and foreigners' interest in the city and its activities, and promote the long-term cultural and social development of the city (Decision 1622/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006). In the designated ECOCs, the cultural programmes, plans and promotional rhetoric usually obey these criteria and other EU instructions, even in detail, because they are a prerequisite for designation.

Implementation of the ECOC year is financed mainly from local, regional and national sources. If the set criteria and expectations are considered to be fulfilled, the EU remits a small fund for expenditure to each designated city. Since 2007 the fund has been €1.5m, and is named the Melina Mercouri Prize, after the Greek minister of culture who initiated the designation. According to the report by Palmer (2004a: 181), the total amount of EU support for a ECOC represented on average only 1.19 percent of the total funding generated for ECOCs in 1995–2004. The average total operation expenditure of the 20 ECOCs between 1995 and 2004 was €37.66m.<sup>1</sup> Besides operating expenditure, the ECOCs use varying amounts of money for different kinds of capital projects.

In general, long-term cultural events and festivals take on a variety of roles, extending from mechanisms to sustain cultural groups, to mechanisms assuring the acceptance of a particular cultural discourse, and from means of creating local pride and identity to generating income (Crespi-Vallbona and Rischards, 2007; Quinn, 2005). Cultural events and festivals have been historically construed as instruments through which place-based communities express identities, celebrate communally held values and strengthen communal bonds (Quinn, 2005). However, recent cultural changes have brought new challenges to the traditional meanings of cultural events and festivals. As Crespi-Vallbona and Richards (2007) have noted in regard to their study on cultural festivals in Catalonia, the cultural content of festivals can be limited, and there is a fear that the more traditional culture of societies is being replaced by globalised popular culture. Similar trajectories can be recognised from the cultural offering of the ECOCs and their reception.

Quinn (2005) has discussed how the traditional functions of cultural events and festivals fare under prevailing entrepreneurial approaches to urban management. Processes of commodification have been blamed for the loss of identity and meaning of local festivals. In the eyes of many, the 'local' loses its 'authenticity' as a result of globalisation and modernisation, while the market economy gains from the tourism spin-off. Such debates underline the idea of cultural events and festivals as contested fields of meaning (Quinn, 2003), in which different groups or stakeholders try to utilise the symbolic capital of the event for their own ends (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards, 2007). Clark (2004) has described modern festivals as a kind of supermarket, where the paying public is persuaded to bulk-buy processed culture. Such events quickly begin to resemble each other, and the danger facing internationally oriented cultural events and festivals is that, in spite of their aims, they may neglect their local resources and cultural needs (Quinn, 2005).

Often, the focus of many previous studies on urban cultural events has been on the replacement of local and traditional culture by a globalised popular culture, and the transition from 'ritual' to 'spectacle' (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards, 2007: 106). This kind of transition is part of a wider development of 'festivalisation' which represents the 'symbolic transformation of public space to a particular form of cultural consumption' (van Elderen, 1997: 126). Often, the commercialisation of festivals has been opposed on the local level (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards, 2007): this kind of shift also has been criticised in the implementation of the ECOC programme.

In general, the ECOC years, the cultural profiles of the designated cities and the management and financing policy of them, have caused tension, severe debate, objection and even counter-movements in several cities, as various studies indicate. The host cities have been criticised, for example, for failing to enable local cultural ownership, overcome real social divides and create lasting cultural legacies (see e.g. Boyle and Hughes, 1991; FitzPatrick, 2009; García, 2004, 2005; Griffiths, 2006; Gunay, 2010; Herrero et al., 2006; McLay, 1990; O'Callaghan, 2011; Richards, 2000; Rommedvedt, 2009). According to O'Callaghan (2011), the problems lie in the core of the ECOC programme as such: the multiple objectives are not mutually reinforcing, and are often contradictory. The events should incorporate economic and cultural objectives, introduce both local culture and cultural heritage and European cultures and identities, stage international arts events, and simultaneously advance the local cultural sector and social inclusion objectives. In O'Callaghan's view, mutually antagonistic discourses and policy objectives create inevitable fragmentation, anxiety and dissonance in the host cities. What kinds of concrete forms have these dissonances taken in the 'contested fields of meaning' of the ECOCs?

Turku, a city of 180,000 inhabitants in southern Finland, was designated as the ECOC for 2011. As in many previous ECOCs, the preparations for the cultural year in the city activated several debates in which (high-)culturally active citizens, local interest groups and cultural associations objected to the management and financing policy of the official Turku 2011 organisation. In Turku, part of the criticism was organised under a project titled 'Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011'. Unlike in the previous ECOCs, the Capital of Subculture project produced a channel for alternative and unofficial culture to promote its position in the city.

In this article I investigate the Capital of Subculture project as an activist counter-discourse to the official programme of Turku 2011 by discussing how and why the counter-discourse was produced, what kinds of cultural and social aims it had, and what kinds of ideologies and power relations were included in its production. Unlike previous studies on tensions and contentions in ECOCs, my focus is on unofficial grass roots-level cultural activism and its networked and culture-oriented strategies in protesting against the ECOC event. Thus, the focus of the article is a special case study in which I analyse the discursive dynamics of the local counter-movement. However, the analysis also indicates the interrelations of the movement between the local and transnational levels. I will emphasise the cultural viewpoint towards activism and explore the meanings of culture in and of social movements. The article indicates how activist counter-discourses not only produce criticism and resistance, but also alternative cultural spaces and products.

## Method

### *Data collection*

The research data consists of multifaceted documents on the Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011 project: newspaper articles, comments on these articles on newspaper websites, text, images and videos on the website of the project, open blogs supporting the project, open discussion forums used by the project activists (such as DIYTurku.net, MuroBBS-Plaza and Takku), the Facebook page of the project, flyers, posters and other texts created by the project activists, YouTube videos filmed by the project activists and TV programmes about the project. In addition, I observed the cultural events and demonstrations organised by the project activists and talked to several of them at the events during field research in Turku in 2011. Thus, the data collection method combines traditional ethnographic observation documented by notes, photographs and videos and virtual ethnography (see e.g. Domínguez et al., 2007; Hine, 2000; Kozinets, 2010), for which the non-participatory observation took place on the aforementioned internet sites.

### *Data analysis*

The data were analysed by the method of discourse analysis. Its theoretical formulations arise from social constructionism, which emphasises the productive role of language, interaction and social practices in the construction of reality. In social constructionism, language is not just an instrument of communication, but it is seen as producing, justifying and changing actual practices (Gergen, 1999; Shotter, 1993). Even though discourse studies include several different orientations, a common viewpoint is in the emphasis placed on the constructed character of social entities, relations and phenomena. In the analysis, some discourses are seen to produce one version of reality, while some produce another (Fairclough, 1992). In this article, discourse is defined as a particular way of representing reality. These representations, which are expressed in the data in text, visualisation, cultural performance and social practice, construct the meanings of the city as the ECOC and the notions of its local culture, urban space and identity.

### *Theoretical aspects to activism: focusing on culture*

During the last few decades, interest groups, social movements and different forms of activism have been researched from various viewpoints and by several different methods. In addition, this multifaceted phenomenon has enabled interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary investigation. By the 1970s, researchers already had become interested in the success of social movements explained, for example, through the theory of resource mobilisation. In addition, social movements have been investigated by analysing the politics and political opportunities provided by the state, which form the societal conditions for the origin and growth of social movements (see e.g. Sriramesh and Kim, 2009). In particular, the so-called new social movements which arose in the 1960s and 1970s as a response to unprecedented state penetration into various private spheres of life, inspired scholars such as Habermas (1981a). In the late 1980s, several social movements scholars focused on identifying members of the movements and began to explore the collective identity of the groups (McCaughey and Ayers, 2003; Melucci, 1989). Since the 1990s, social movements have been analysed in order to investigate networks of relations and trace the flow of information through them, and to discover what effects these relations have on people and organisations (Diani, 1992a; Garrido and Halavais, 2003).

Reed (2005) points out that social movements as forces of cultural change have been pretty much neglected in previous research. However, various scholars have recognised the cultural nature of social movements in their studies. Habermas (1981a, 1981b) pointed out that the nature of action of new social movements is social and cultural, rather than economic. Social movements are not only reactions to unsatisfied conditions; they also can be proactive by generating new forms of interaction, communication and culture (see e.g. Melucci, 1989, 1996). In fact, the cultural aspect of social movements has been interpreted as one of the major factors encouraging and attracting people to join a movement. As Tarrow (1998) suggests, ideology is a rather dry way of describing what moves people to action. Therefore, in recent years, scholars have begun to use terms such as 'cultural discourse', 'cognitive frame' and 'ideological package' to describe the shared meanings that inspire people to collective action (Tarrow, 1998). The formation of collective identities – a sense of belonging – is a crucial motivator to join and stay in a social movement. As Reed (2005) notes, people enter movements as individuals and need a feeling of individual commitment, but at the same time they gain a sense of collective identity as a part of the group effort that is the defining feature of a movement. Cultural products have a significant role in fostering a sense of belonging to movements.

In this article I follow Reed's viewpoints by focusing the investigation on the cultural aspect of social movements and activism. According to Reed, the cultural study of social movements needs to pay attention to various relationships between and among movement cultures, and the cultural formations of movements and subcultures. By movement culture, Reed means the 'general meaning making patterns that develop among participants in the subculture formed by a given movement' (2005: 296). The action and communication in movements produce various cultural formations and objects which can have a wide or a narrow agenda in terms of opposition to dominant cultural forms. However, usually their first concern is thought of as being aesthetic rather than political (Reed, 2005). By subcultures, Reed (2005) means the more or less political elements that mediate between movement cultures and their cultural formations. As such, subcultures

do not centrally employ strategies which directly challenge existing political, economic or social systems. Focusing on cultural aspects in the study of social movements does not narrow the investigation to them, because in social movements cultural, social, economic and political domains coexist and intertwine in various ways (Reed, 2005).

The cultural domain is important in social movements for various reasons. As mentioned previously, communality and collective identity are manifested often in social movements by cultural codes expressed, for example, through music, clothes, murals, poetry, theatre, graphic arts and so forth (see Reed, 2005; Tarrow, 1998). Cultural formations are also one of the key sites where re-socialisation to the movement or re-education to its goals is particularly intensive and extensive (Reed, 2005). Through culture the movements express, spread and establish their aims, values and world views among non-members, and thus influence the mainstream or dominant culture. As Reed (2005) points out, at times this diffusion of a movement culture into the mainstream culture can be the most important impact that a given movement has. Faye Ginsburg (1997) introduced the term 'cultural activism' to interpret the public efforts of various groups and movements that use cultural objects to articulate their political aims. Since then, other scholars also have used the term in their investigations on various social practices, political identity manifestations and multiple kinds of public actions that people use to alter the circumstances of their lives (see e.g. Checker and Fishman, 2004).

What kinds of actions do we eventually mean when we talk about social movements and activism? In general, confrontation, resistance or counter-discourse gets its meaning only in relation to some norm, custom or border (see e.g. Foucault, 1998). Resistance does not necessarily mean rejection or revoking a norm: it also can aim to renegotiate the borders or elaborate more interpretations or alternative viewpoint to the norm. Often, social movements, activism in particular, are related to expressions of extremist resistance, violent protest or deprivation, even though they are better characterised by different kinds of dialectical moments of struggle intertwined with emotions, hope, affirmation and social solidarity (Hands, 2011; Tarrow, 1998). Being a part of the social or activist movement can be adopted as a lifestyle and concretised in individual choices in quite non-dramatic acts of everyday life. Cultural activists in particular often utilise cultural objects instead of working through political channels, in order for their efforts to have direct and immediate consequences (Checker and Fishman, 2004).

In their studies of resistance, scholars frequently use the terms 'social movement' and 'activism' in an overlapping manner. Some scholars have referred to social movements and activists as 'special interest groups' (Mintzberg, 1983) or just 'interest groups' (Browne, 1998). Sriramesh and Kim (2009) utilise the definition of social movements by Tarrow (1994) and activism by Diani (1992b) and Burstein (1998) to define activism as:

The coordinated effort of a group that organizes voluntarily in an effort to solve problems that threaten the common interest of members of the group. In the process of problem solving, core members of the group attract other social constituents or publics, create and maintain a shared collective identity among members for the time being and mobilize resources and power to influence the problem-causing entity's decision or action through communicative action such as education, negotiation, persuasion, pressure tactics or force. (Sriramesh and Kim, 2009: 81–82)

In this article I lean on Sriramesh and Kim's broad definition of activism and discuss the Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011 project as a counter-discourse, the activities of which can be defined as cultural activism due to their strong focus on cultural aims and the cultural efforts used in the attempts to achieve them. The next section will explore how the activists in the project produced and used culture as a counter-discourse to the official programme of Turku 2011. This exploration is followed by sections that will investigate the movement culture of the project and its subcultural position.

## Findings and discussion

### *Cultural activism as a counter-discourse to the official programme of Turku 2011*

Turku was selected as the ECOC out of seven Finnish candidate cities in 2007. The preparation and implementation of the cultural year were organised by setting up an independent Turku 2011 Foundation which took care of planning, coordinating and promoting the cultural events. The budget of the Turku 2011 project rose to €55m, in addition to which €145m was used in capital investments in various infrastructural projects. In the application book and promotional material, encouraging well-being, internationalism, creative industries and cultural export were defined as the main goals of the Turku 2011 programme (Helander et al., 2006; Määttä, 2010). In addition, the foundation aimed to activate local people to participate in preparing and implementing the ECOC events. This aim led the foundation to set up a broad voluntary programme in which more than 400 voluntary citizens worked during the cultural year, and to launch an open project call in which everybody could suggest cultural projects to be funded and included in the official programme of Turku 2011.

The open project call was very popular and encouraged various groups, associations and local citizens to participate in it. The foundation selected more than 100 projects from the proposals to be added to the official programme of Turku 2011. On the whole, three-quarters of the projects were based on suggestions sent to the open call. In addition, the foundation set up a webpage to help people think about the cultural programme, and through which they could submit ideas for the forthcoming ECOC year. The official programme of Turku 2011 included 155 cultural projects in total, which covered a broad selection of different art genres ranging from social and community events to sport and science. However, many planned and proposed projects did not fit within the official programme and were not executed due to a lack of funding and facilities. The selection process caused feelings of both success and disappointment among the applicants, creating enthusiasm and frustration towards the planning and implementation of the ECOC year.

Critical reaction towards the official programme and its planning appeared soon after the city won the title. Several concurrent, local cultural political decisions which cut the resources from local cultural operators and cultural institutions functioned as an impulse to the criticism. In a severe economic situation, the city decided to run down two small local public libraries and close down a building that housed workspaces for local artists, leaving many of them unable to work. At the same time the financing of the local art



academy was diminished and its pedagogical selection narrowed. In addition, many citizens experienced that the city was neglecting its architectural heritage by leaving several old wooden houses in the inner city unused, without restoration: in fact, the city decided to demolish one of these houses in 2011. All these actions caused a lot of critical public discussion in the local media. The city's ECOC designation intensified these discussions, and could be used as a basis for arguments in all culture-related issues (see also Kankkunen, 2011). Some local communal and heritage associations even sent an appeal to the Monitoring and Advisory Panel of the EU Commission's Department of Culture, claiming that the city 'has not fulfilled or abided by the spirit and letter of the European Capital of Culture programme', and appealing 'to the European Union to institute the necessary steps and measures in order to prevent further destruction of culturally and historically valuable buildings in the city' (de Anna et al., 2011).

In addition to these incidents, several local students, young cultural operators and artists (men and women, generally aged under 30) criticised the city's unwillingness to offer space and resources for small-scale, 'alternative' or youth cultural activities. A group of art students, artists and other similar-minded local people already had organised and set up an association in 2006, aiming to establish a new type of cultural centre based on voluntary and independent cultural production. To speed up their attempt and to criticise the estate policy of the city, this group of like-minded people started to squat in empty city-owned buildings and run cultural activities in them. The city decided to impose zero tolerance towards squatting.

This was not the first time that the policies and values of the city authorities in Turku had collided with the values and practices of the cultural or subcultural scene in the city. In the cultural circles of Finland, Turku is known for its lively underground scene, which emerged in the 1960s in music, literature and the visual arts. In the following decade, the underground scene was strengthened by a strong punk movement. In the 1960s and 1970s, alternative and provocative performances and works of art caused both local and nationwide scandals that were even thrashed out in court. Still today, the alternative cultural and subcultural atmosphere and scene remain strong in the city (Komulainen and Leppänen, 2009).

After Turku won the ECOC designation, the same local people who were interested in establishing the independent cultural centre in the city launched an activist project titled Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011 as a response to the 'culture-hostile attitude' (source: 2011 Art Slum flyer)<sup>2</sup> of the city, and to the unwillingness of the Turku 2011 Foundation to intervene in the above-mentioned faults in the local cultural scene. In addition, the high budget of the Turku 2011 programme and the plans to use money to invite foreign artists to perform in the city during the cultural year were criticised: the activists emphasised the importance of supporting local artists, cultural operators and small-scale cultural activities. Criticism also focused on the concept of culture and the audience-participant-artist relationship in the official programme. One of the founding figures of the Capital of Subculture project, puppeteer Suvi Auvinen, described the critical viewpoints of the project as follows:

We also see the culture itself as a very broad issue. It does not mean just painting paintings and watching theatre, but it can also mean, for example, reading fairytales to children on the

bank of the Aura River. The Cultural Capital has promised to promote the cause of small people and us doing things together, but practically it has not been shown anywhere. (in *Suomi Express*, 2008)

We want to get people to participate in the making of culture and we do not only offer experiences, but instead we want to say that everyone is an artist. We want to point out that the quality of culture does not depend on the money used, but on people's eagerness and zeal towards the subjects which they create and experience. (in *Ajankohtainen kakkonen*, 2008)

The previous quotations are from magazine programmes broadcast by the national public broadcasting company: the project received a lot of local and national media attention from the very beginning. As they indicate, the spokespeople of the project emphasised a bottom-up viewpoint to cultural production, the innate and everyday creativity of people and an idea of culture as opposed to consumption and the economic domain. The latter interview was filmed in the Festival of Free Culture organised by the project in a squatted building in Turku in 2008. The festival programme consisted of tens of voluntarily organised cultural performances and workshops with a total budget of €10.40. The criticism towards economic forces behind the cultural production in ECOCs was one of the motivators for launching the project. Auvinen described the starting point for the project in a critical anthology on the official Turku 2011 programme as follows:

[T]here was a fear that the 'Cultural Capital's' last funds for the artists would be wasted in mega-spectacles brought from elsewhere and which the common citizens could not access. There emerged a will to present the local culture, which would look like us, the common people and be in our scale and the content and ticket prices of which would not be determined by the rules of capitalist profit-seeking but by working genuinely together. (Auvinen, 2011: 35)

The counter-discourse of the project objected to the commercial 'festivalisation' of culture, the transformation of culture into spectacles, undemocratic cultural management and seeing receivers of culture as a passive audience instead of considering them as creative subjects. In addition, the activists strongly criticised the cultural hierarchies between different genres of culture and the dichotomies between high, mainstream, popular, low and subculture. Thus, the project itself aimed to avoid a hierarchical structure. The project's activities were planned in open meetings without a formal organisation or leaders: 'Anyone can take the lead in the Capital of Subculture' (Tuomi, 2011), stated one of the activists, student Jonne Pohjois-Koivisto, in a student magazine interview. The activists' disappointment towards the management of the Turku 2011 programme and the planning and decisions of the open project call was manifested in the counter-discourse through emphasising the openness of the Capital of Subculture project: everyone was invited to produce cultural performances using the title, as the Facebook page of the project indicates:

Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011 project aims at gathering together those who make and experience free culture. We claim culture as a free playground where everyone can be an artist in spite of their official title and where everyone's culture is equally valuable. The

Capital of Subculture lives in people, takes place in the streets and operates in the air. All friends of self-generated production are welcome to include their dreams and projects as parts of the enterprise, to network, to empower and to get inspired. ('Turku – The European Capital of Subculture 2011', nd)

As this indicates, the counter-discourse stressed the openness of the idea of cultural production and the concept of the artist. In addition, cultural production was determined through independence from cultural institutions or cultural infrastructure: in the discourse, the everyday environment was considered both a possible and an eligible space for cultural production.

The activism of the Capital of Subculture project was determined by the idea of independence in cultural production. Like many cultural and artistic movements of the previous century, the project created its own manifesto in which its worldview and main goals were declared. The manifesto brings to the fore anti-consumerist and anti-neoliberal viewpoints towards culture:

The broadly spread ideology of accountability and efficiency in society harnesses culture as the motor oil of creative economy and isolates art through the ticket price. When the city space is blocked from everyone except the buying customer, the value of the common environment for human interaction is forgotten ... Free culture delights and provokes with poetic terrorism, non-explicated performances, taking possession of space, small truths and the return of the community. The year will see the constant communication of subcultures, populating the wasteland, mocking the distinction of genres. It will be the physical manifestation of subculture, which takes place in domains difficult or even impossible for the dominant culture to deal with. (Alakulttuuripääkaupunkimanifesti, 2007)

Here, the counter-discourse borrows its mode of expression both from artistic rhetoric and anti-neoliberal discourses typical to various contemporary new social movements. It emphasises direct action, but in cultural terms.

Many of the cultural activities in the project were based on reusing the cultural codes of the Turku 2011 official programme. This type of cultural activism has been discussed as 'semiotic terrorism' or simply as 'culture jamming', which aims to reverse and transgress the meaning of cultural codes used in ideological, political and economical campaigns (Jordan, 2002; Meikle, 2010). The project's website introduced several ironic cultural events which mocked or parodied the events of the official Turku 2011 programme. The logo of the Capital of Subculture project was based on same logo with the official programme, but with an added overlapping stamp print proclaiming: 'We too are building Turku as the European Capital of Subculture 2011.' The logo was available on the project's website, and spreading it was encouraged. It was used on various webpages supporting the ideology of the project, and printed in advertisements and flyers promoting the events organised by the project.

The project organised annually various cultural events such as the Festival of Free Culture: police intervention ended the festival several times. The activist motive for organising the festival was to raise a question regarding the use and ownership of urban space. In the activists' counter-discourse, the city and its urban space belong to the

citizens, who have the right to use it for their own purposes. This is how one of the activists advertised the Festival of Free Culture in a blog entry:

The Festival of Free Culture has originated from the need to make the city space look like people, like ourselves. In a public space usually only those who are able to pay for publicity and whom advertising companies accept on their billboards are allowed to be seen. We think that the city belongs to the citizens and they are allowed to be seen and heard in the city space. The Festival of Free Culture is a part of the global fight for free city space. We have raised culture as an important weapon in this fight. ('AutoNomia', 2009)

The rhetoric of this discourse includes the anti-capitalist and militant vocabulary typically used by leftist new social movements.

Another long-term cultural event organised by the Capital of Subculture project since 2007 is a 'protest camp festival' (DIYTurku.net, 2011) called 'Art Slum', which aims to 'comment on the long continued lack of work space for artists in Turku and the hostile attitude of the city towards culture' (source: 2011 Art Slum flyer). The activists built the Art Slums on public space in the city centre from waste material and used them as venues for various cultural activities such as band concerts, performances, poetry readings, exhibitions, workshops and discussions. The Art Slums, like other organised cultural events, were open for everybody to follow and participate in – the activists estimated that there were more than 100 participants in 2011. However, at the same time this openness weakened the original protest nature of the slums, when the evening programme in particular attracted partying youngsters. In 2011 the Art Slum was ended by police intervention because the activists had not pulled down the slum by the given deadline. City workers demolished the slum and cleaned the park in which it was set up. Documented police interventions, as well as other conflicts with the city authorities, were often uploaded to the project webpage or on YouTube. These images and videos were used as a means of propagating the activists' aims: the images and videos portrayed the activists and their notion of culture as the victims of the city authority.

One of the main focuses in the rhetoric and action of the counter-discourse in the Capital of Subculture project was the city space. In the counter-discourse, the current city space was represented as a dominated, bureaucratic and commercial space that hindered citizens' spontaneous creativity and independence to influence their everyday environment. Thus, the city space needed to be returned to its citizens for their free use. The idea of the city space was intertwined with its citizens, expressed for example in a demonstration organised as a part of the Art Slum in 2011: during it the activists shouted, 'We are the city, the city belongs to us'. The city space was seen as getting meaning only through free and non-hierarchical use by its citizens.

As the previous quotations indicate, the activists positioned themselves in the counter-discourse as 'we' and 'the citizens'. In addition, they referred to themselves as 'artists', 'street artists' and 'makers and friends of art', thus emphasising the citizens' creative potential. The counter-discourse produced a unified and culturally minded image of the activists. Their opponent was also produced as a unified or even singular agent: 'high culture', 'the city', 'Turku', 'Capital of Culture' or 'the bureaucrats'. In the media texts the agents of the Capital of Subculture project were referred often to as

‘activists’ or ‘cultural activists’. However, in the newspaper discussion forums, they were spoken of as ‘teenagers’ and ‘youth’, or even as ‘criminals’, ‘hooligans’, ‘hippies’, ‘drunks’ or ‘kooks’, even though in many cases the writers shared the criticism towards the cultural management, decision-making and use of money in Turku 2011. In general, the Capital of Subculture project offered an interesting subject from the media’s viewpoint, and the activists were contacted a lot by journalists and editors who were seeking a good (adversarial) story.

The activists’ discursive positions manifest the power relations between the counter-discourse and the official programme of Turku 2011. As mentioned previously, in the counter-discourse, the official programme represents the criticised values of the festivalisation and commercialisation of culture and a neglect of local, spontaneous and self-generated small-scale cultural production. However, from the official programme’s viewpoint, the cultural content of the Capital of Subculture project manifested the idea of bringing local people into the creation of culture: the goal that was emphasised both in the policy texts of the EU and the application book and promotional rhetoric of Turku 2011. Thus the programme director of Turku 2011, Suvi Innilä, contacted the activists and advised them to leave an application in the open project call in order to become a part of the official programme and to get funding, space and publicity for their cultural aims. However, the activists declined: ‘Our project emerged as a response to the values and the course of action of the Turku 2011 project – how could we ever want to become a part of something we try to be an alternative to?’ (Auvinen, 2011: 37), stated the spokesperson for the activists, Auvinen, in a critical book on Turku 2011. The activists seemed to get the inspiration and motivation for their activities from objection to the official programme. On the one hand, negotiation and compromise with, and adaptation to, the official course of action might have speeded up the activists’ aims in setting up their own independent cultural centre and producing cultural events with the type of content and a way of organisation that would have followed their aims and values. On the other hand, adapting to the official course of action might have suppressed the activist cultural practices, which formed the core of the project itself.

In general, cultural products are profoundly efficient tools for activist movements because they can combine easily the private and public domains and the emotional and intellectual dimensions (see e.g. Reed, 2005). As the Capital of Subculture project indicates, the creation of cultural products such as festivals, singular performances or posters of them, enabled both individual effort and a collective experience to belong to, and thus became a part of the movement. Through the project, private cultural production could be shared both in virtual and physical forums. Sharing cultural products and creating them together within the project strengthened the emotional ties to it, while bringing to the fore the movement’s ideological dimension.

### ***Movement culture in the Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011 project***

The activists of the Capital of Subculture project shared a strong movement culture, speaking in the terms of Reed (2005). The basis for the movement culture in the project was in its common anti-neoliberal and leftist world views and values. This basis

was strengthened in the project through other networks in which the activists functioned or with which they cooperated. Besides squatting, for example, the same activist circles protested against nuclear power, supported animal rights and the peace movement, propagated the message of the Anonymous and took part in the 'Critical Mass' cycling event, 'Slutwalk' and a demonstration against faults in the conservation of built heritage. The latter took place during the visit of the Head of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso, to Turku as a guest of the city and the Turku 2011 Foundation.

One of the main ideologies in the Capital of Subculture project was to object to the commercialisation of culture in the official programme of Turku 2011. Besides the free festivals organised by the project, the same activist circles planned and implemented other protests against consumerism and capitalist logic, such as 'flash mob freezings' in a mall (an organised routine in which the activists held a pose in silence for some minutes), self-organised urban picnics on parking lots, or shopping trolley jamming in a local supermarket. Models for these protests were found from abroad, and the actions were filmed and uploaded to blogs, Facebook and YouTube. Due to the networked nature of activism, the borders of the Capital of Subculture project are difficult to draw. In fact this kind of fluid and networked nature characterises the movement culture of various contemporary activist groups and so-called new social movements.

The movement culture of the Capital of Subculture project is characterised by the intersection of local and global dimensions of activism. On the one hand, the focus of the project was on local issues, and it functioned locally. On the other hand, the ideological base of the project referred to international or global activist movements and their contemporary manners of protesting. In particular, the project's opposition to neoliberal policies in the domain of culture reflects the recent trajectories of social movements. Several scholars have explained the shift in the axis of power from politics to the market, by emphasising the role of neoliberal economic policies in increasing the power of multinational corporations and reducing the capacity of traditional state structures to control them. This development has produced counter-reactions and, thus strengthened the social movements that protest against the process of corporate globalisation or transnational corporate capital (della Porta and Tarrow, 2005; Reed, 2005).

In general, globalisation has influenced contemporary forms of activism (Tarrow, 2005). According to Tarrow and della Porta (2005), the new activist stratum is influenced by three recently strengthened elements: rooted cosmopolitanism, multiple belongings and flexible identities. By rooted cosmopolitanism, the concept borrowed from Appiah (2005), Tarrow and della Porta refer to people and groups who are rooted in specific national contexts, but who are involved in transnational networks of contacts and conflicts due to their activities. A common feature of contemporary activism is the presence of activists with overlapping memberships linked within loosely structured, polycentric networks. Activists' flexible identities enable concurrent identification with various groups and networks, as well as around common campaigns. The Capital of Subculture project reflects all these elements. In addition, the new activist stratum seems to be intertwined with the cultural production: culture functions both as the medium and the message of resistance. The protest is created in various cultural formations that are mediated in common gatherings, within public space and online.

The spread of the internet and the development of social media have had a major influence on the recent organisation of social movements and intensification of activism. As the Capital of Subculture project indicates, social media offer both an easy platform for networking, communication and organisation, and a virtual space in which the activism itself may take place. Thus, contemporary strategies of activism can be distinguished either as internet-enhanced or internet-based (Vegh, 2003). For about a decade, social movement scholars have stressed either the empowering impact, emerging new possibilities and the general importance of the internet in the development of social movements (Bennett, 2003; McCaughey and Ayers, 2003; Reed, 2005; Tarrow, 2005), or reminded that the internet per se does not offer a passage from structure to action – it has to be mobilised by committed individuals or organisations in order to serve as an instrument for collective action (Bennett, 2003; Tarrow and della Porta, 2005). McCaughey and Ayers (2003) point out that the internet has changed substantially what counts as activism, community, collective identity, democratic space and political strategy. The ease and commonness of using the internet and social media for stating an opinion, showing support or protesting against recognised faults blurs the previous definitions of activism and social movement.

One of the major changes provided by the networked social media is its potential to facilitate virtually anonymous, decentralised and leaderless social communication (Bennett, 2003, 2005; see also McCaughey and Ayers, 2003). The Capital of Subculture project emphasised in its counter-discourse a decentralised and leaderless structure based on anti-hierarchical and democratic ties between activists. As a response to the official programme of Turku 2011, the project invited everybody to participate in cultural production without control over self-organised actions. However, self-organisation has to be supervised in order to produce and mediate the necessary collective knowledge of the movement (Escobar, 2004).

Even though the counter-discourse emphasised the openness of the project and the equality of its agents, the project included its own structure determined, for example, by friendships, different interests in implementing the aims of the project, links to other activist networks and activity to participate in the project. The counter-discourse had its spokespeople whose interests determined how the discourse was formed. The core group of the project comprised only around a dozen activists; however, the organisation of festivals and other cultural events, and the cooperation with other activist networks, multiplied the number of people involved. One of the project activists, Jonne Pohjois-Koivisto, stated in a student magazine interview: ‘In our web page, one can get acquainted with our main principles and our manifesto. By understanding our course of action anyone can join and bring along something new’ (in Tuomi, 2011). However, this emphasis on openness and the invitation for everybody to join the project did not mean acceptance of everything. The internet discussion forums also reveal disagreement between the activists on the implementation of cultural events such as the Art Slum, in which some of the participants consumed a lot of alcohol. As ‘Jonne’ wrote in the discussion forum after the Art Slum: ‘This time also the “like-minded” have started to disapprove, which I think is worrying’ (‘Jonne’, 2011). The project itself created hierarchies, and the ruptures in its like-minded core were interpreted as a negative development.

### *Subculture: an impulse for and a product of activism*

As mentioned previously, according to Reed, subcultures mediate between movement cultures and their cultural formations. For Reed, subcultures seem to form a fluid and loose category which does not challenge power systems as such. The concept of subculture has been used in academic studies since the 1970s. Scholars used the concept to refer to protest by working-class youth, which was manifested through various styles such as punk (Hall and Jefferson, 1975). While countercultures have been defined through their criticism of the values, norms and practices of the majority, subcultures have been interpreted to criticise the middle-class culture in particular, yet in a more latent manner than the countercultures. The criticism of subcultures has been expressed rather in the style, not in the direct statements or action (Duncombe, 2002; Roszak, 1969). Both countercultures and subcultures need a so-called dominant culture against which they can determine their own values and world views. Recent studies have criticised both counterculture and subculture theories for their incapability to describe the contemporary cultural condition, in which protests are more fragmented and blurred. Cultural or stylistic protest is no longer tied to class; rather, it is manifested through different alternative lifestyles. In addition, the contemporary dominant culture has become increasingly fragmented (Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003).

In the Capital of Subculture project, the concept of subculture was taken to its discursive core. How was this concept used and given meaning in the counter-discourse of the project? Understanding subculture as a fluid lifestyle category manifested through styles, and 'the culture of alternativeness' describes the cultural ethos of the Capital of Subculture project. The activists in the project discussed the concept of subculture in their meetings and defined its meanings in their texts. 'Alakulttuurijäbä' summarised the discussions on the concept in the discussion forum:

In a five-hour discussion it was pondered if instead of subculture we should talk about marginal culture. About action which goes along with the dominant culture, but is not recognized to a similar degree when cultural production is discussed. The group, however, held on to 'subculture', because it offers a multifaceted point of view. It does not categorize cultural agents by their form of expression. 'Subculture' enables the idea of a person being able to act in several cultural environments at the same time without being fundamentally defined by being an outsider or different. Acting in a subculture is not an alternative action, but a simultaneous one. From this point of view, culture is not seen as heading to a one unified direction. Culture rather includes concurrent dimensions, which move in different directions. ('Alakulttuurijäbä', 2008)

Indeed, the borders of subculture and dominant culture, and the counter-discourse and the official discourse of Turku 2011, are not easy to draw due to the multiplicity of the groups to which the members belong and their flexible identities. In many cases, the discourses formed a dialogue and the activities of the Capital of Subculture and the official Turku 2011 were connected unproblematically. For example, one of the major projects in the official Turku 2011 programme was the documentary film *Battle for the City* (dir. Jouko Aaltonen). The premiere of the film was organised and advertised by the



Turku 2011 Foundation; also, the film was sold at the main venues of the official programme. The film is about a phenomenon called 'the malady of Turku', which refers to the demolishing of old historical buildings in the city centre, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, and replacing them with modern apartment blocks. These processes included multi-level political horse-trading, and civil protests and demonstrations failed to stop the demolition. In the film, the director draws a parallel between the demonstrations of the past decades to the activism of the Capital of Subculture project and the networks close to it. Clips from present-day squatting and demonstrations in Turku are cut with historical images. Suvi Auvinen participated as an invited speaker in a panel discussion organised after the premiere. The film, panel discussion and other projects which were part of the official Turku 2011 programme were advertised in the discussion forums used by the activists.

In general, many of the activists with whom I talked during field research in Turku admitted to being surprised by how extensive the official Turku 2011 programme was. Many of them had participated in various events, ranging from street cultural projects to quite traditional and 'high cultural' concerts. Some of them even mentioned having applied for funding from the open project call for their own projects, but to no avail.

## Conclusion

The ECOC programme and its implementation can be interpreted as a complex space of distinguishing interests, tensions and power relations. The ECOC designation as such is the EU's cultural political instrument which includes strong political, economic and ideological dimensions that inevitably create enthusiasm and interest among local agents. Usually, planning and implementation of the cultural year has produced critical discussion which, at its best, brings to the fore the various problems in different local domains and allows citizens to participate in a public dialogue in solving the recognised problems.

In Turku, the ECOC designation activated various critical discussions on cultural political decision-making and the attitude of the city towards local culture, heritage, cultural institutions and citizens. In addition, the designation activated organised protests and cultural activism, which formed a counter-discourse to the official programme of Turku 2011. This investigation into the Turku – European Capital of Subculture 2011 project indicates that culture has a crucial role in activism: in addition to rooted cosmopolitanism, multiple belonging and flexible identities, it can be considered to be one of the key elements in the new activist stratum. Criticism of the Capital of Subculture project towards festivalisation and economic emphasis in cultural production was manifested in cultural events and products created by the activists. As such, the project produced a strong movement culture with common practices, shared values and world views. Through cultural production and movement culture, the project participated in the creation of a subculture: a fluid and flexible cultural category expressed, for example, through stylistic and lifestyle choices. The study indicates how culture has several functions in the activist projects: it provides a means to express shared and individual values, views and sentiments, spread ideological and political ideas and information, raise public attention, create communality and a feeling of belonging and identity, re-socialise new

(and old) members to the community, and communicate and negotiate ideological and political differences with the official power and the status quo.

The Capital of Subculture project had diverse local impacts on the city. On the one hand, it succeeded in raising public attention and critical interest in the implementation of the ECOC year, and brought to the fore the active alternative (youth) cultural scene in the city. On the other hand, public attention was not only positive, but also caused negative and even hostile attitudes toward the activists and their cultural attempts. The most significant impact of the project was probably its activating and communal influence on its own participants. Through the project, critical-minded and culture-orientated youth, students and young adults could work for a meaningful common goal, get involved in creating the local subcultural scene, strengthen their feeling of belonging and identity and foster their social networks.

In general, one of the main aims of the ECOC designation is to gather local cultural forces to work on a common project. Even though the ECOC year includes diverse cultural performances and events, the official ECOC programme is usually managed by organising it using a few key themes decided on by the main management agency, marketing it with common slogans and logos and communicating it with a coherent management rhetoric. The underlying structure of the ECOC initiative is based on a bureaucratic and hierarchical top-town policy, in which the EU forms the uppermost level. The proposing, planning, implementing and follow-up phases of the designation are subordinated to formal evaluation and reporting processes instructed by the EU. This kind of 'heavy' structure of the initiative influences the planning, production and management of the cultural events of the ECOC year, and has an effect on notions of culture, cultural production and cultural consumption within the frame of the initiative, respectively.

Could the initiative be more open and flexible to diverse cultural attempts and interests in the local cultural scene? Could the grass roots level and bottom-up initiatives be involved more effectively in the planning and implementation of the ECOC year? The renewal of the whole ECOC initiative by deconstructing its control-based management ideas, top-down policies and aims for coherence and clarity in the structure of the cultural programme would enable possibly the broader participation and involvement of local citizens, bottom-up initiatives and grass roots-level cultural activities in the implementation of the ECOC year. However, is the widest possible involvement of local cultural layers a goal to be aspired to and aimed at using all possible means? This study indicates that all cultural layers in the designated cities do not necessarily want to be involved in implementation of the ECOC year. As the case of the Capital of Subculture indicates, the activists wanted to criticise its implementation and produce an alternative to it, not to be 'swallowed up' by the initiative.

The investigation also revealed that the counter-discourse of the Capital of Subculture project and the official Turku 2011 discourse shared many similar views, although the focus was on their differences at a discursive level. Both discourses aimed at activating local people to participate in cultural production, increasing their interest in the local environment and its uses, emphasising diversity of cultural expression and valuing small-scale cultural projects and everyday cultural experiences. Eventually, the aim of the Capital of Subculture project to set up an autonomous cultural centre obeyed a

relatively normative idea of cultural production: establishing a cultural institute with an estate for the production and reception of culture.

The ending of the cultural year of Turku did not end the activism. One of the activists concluded her blog by predicting the future of the counter-discourse as follows:

The year 2011 has been celebrated. The official high culture will withdraw to suffer its cultural hangover, but the subculture lives and feels well in the cellars of the structures never reached by the celebrative speeches. Culture is dead, long live culture!

In the year 2012 the battle for Turku continues. Folk struggle against the power of capital and hierarchies and for the freedom of people and city space in everyday life and in everyday culture, which does not recognise tickets and sponsorship funding. The Capital of Subculture year is over, but the squatting and space invading as social combat, participation and resistance will continue in the future. ('AutoNomia', 2012)

When an activist movement is based on cultural production, strong movement culture and a subcultural lifestyle, the activism never reaches a condition in which it would become unnecessary. The motivation for activism shifts from the external to internal condition. Even though the sought-after changes would take place in the local community or broader society, cultural production, movement culture and subcultural lifestyle continue to unify people and give impulse to their common action. Cultural activism gets its power from its own culture of resistance.

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## Notes

1. The calculations are based on budgets exposed in the Palmer (2004b) report.
2. All translations from Finnish to English are by the author.

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### Biographical note

Tuuli Lähdesmäki is a researcher in the Department of Art and Culture Studies, University of Jyväskylä. She specialises in the analysis of identity politics and processes in contemporary culture. She has written over 40 scientific publications on these topics in Finnish, English and Hungarian. She is an editor of the scientific series *Nykykulttuuri* [*Contemporary Culture*] and *Taidehistoriallisia tutkimuksia* [*Studies in Art History*] and the online journal *Tahiti – taidehistoria tieteenä* [*Tahiti – Art History as Science*]. In her current research project titled ‘Identity politics in Pécs, Tallinn and Turku as European Capitals of Culture’ (ID-ECC), funded by the Academy of Finland, she explores EU cultural policy and cultural programmes and their impacts on cultural production at the local, regional, national and European levels.

**TUULI LÄHDESMÄKI**  
*Identity Politics in the  
European Capital of  
Culture Initiative*



The European Capital of Culture is one of the longest running cultural initiatives of the EU. The research investigates the dynamics and power relations in the identity politics of the initiative. The focus is on the production and relations of local, regional, national, and European identities and their intertwinement with policy, promotional, and reception discourses of the initiative. The inter-disciplinary investigation combines sociology with policy, urban, reception, and cultural studies.



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